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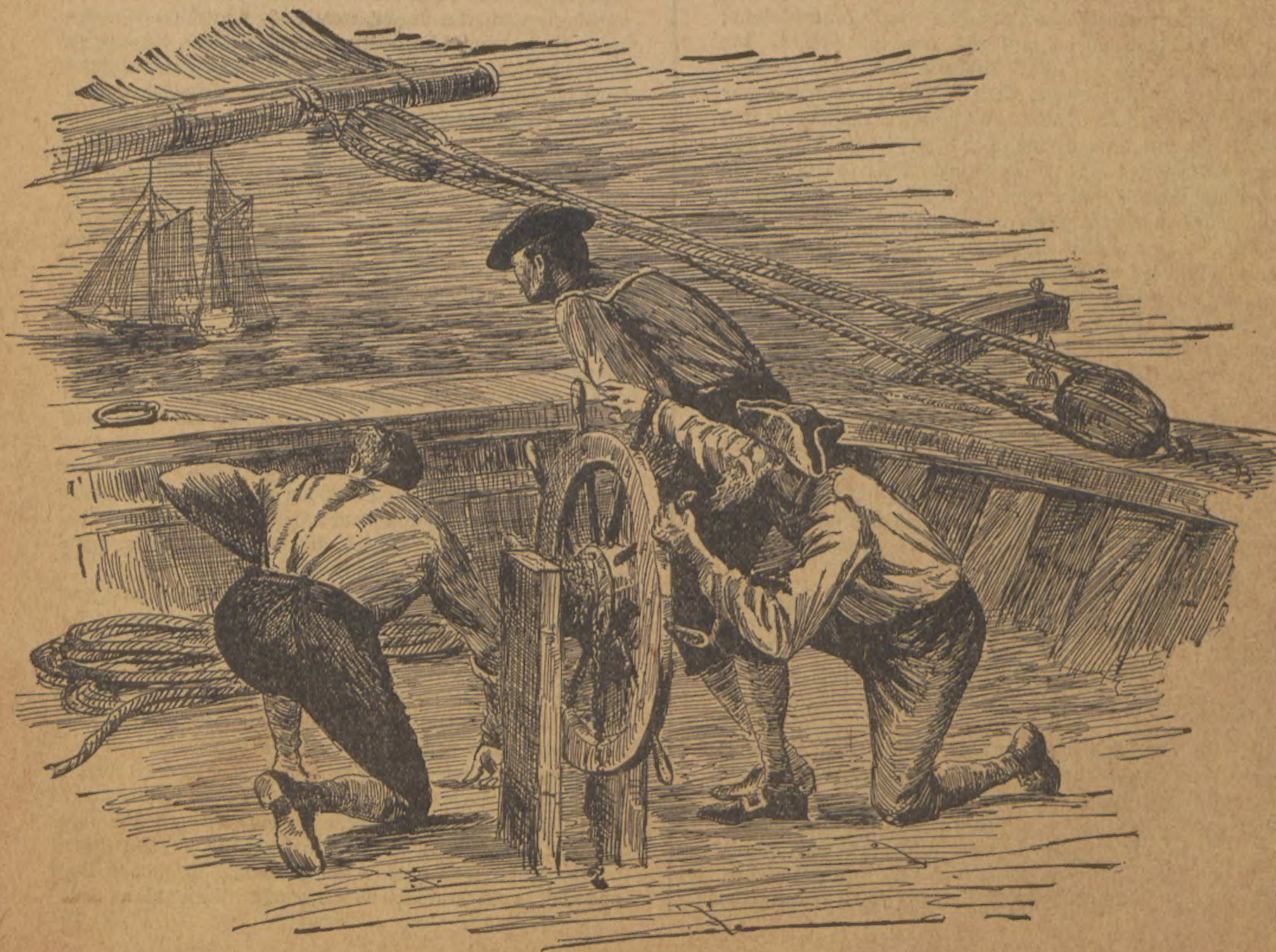
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THE HUNTED SLOOP; or, ON AND OFF SOUNDINGS.

By Professor J. H. Ingraham.



A bright flash illumined the water; then the report of a heavy gun reached them.

THE HUNTED SLOOP;

—OR—

ON AND OFF SOUNDINGS.

A Tale of the Coast in the War of 1812.

BY PROFESSOR J. H. INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE YANKEE SKIPPER.

"WELL, my lad, now that *you* have taken a good look at my craft how do you like her? To be sure *she* an't much to speak on compar-ed with the man-o' war's you've likely been used to seein'; but then I wouldn't be *ashamed* on her in London; for though she is a *Kennebec* clean from kelson to truck she is a beauty and sails *like* a duck! And there is a rhyme for you, too."

"She is a trim sloop, sir. I can see no fault in her; and if she sails as well as she looks I should like to take passage in her; for I am told you are bound to the eastward the first fair wind!"

"That's my intention, so you see that you've not been *told* what an't true. I've been anchored off the eend o' the wharf here now a day and a half waiting for the wind to chop round. So you are bound down to Kennebec?"

"Yes, Captain, and don't care how soon you sail?"

"May'be you've just landed from the frigate as come in yesterday, and have been paid off and are in a hurry to see some sweet-heart, or *perhaps*, better still, an old widow-mother down east."

"Not a sweet-heart, Captain, only a mother."

"Well, mothers always first, sweet-hearts afterwards. All in good time. So you b'long down our way?"

"Yes."

"And have been off during the war on a cruise?"

"Yes."

"I guessed it. Well, judgin' by the way them 'ere clouds drift I guess we shall have a change o' wind afore midnight; so, you had best come aboard with your kit to-night. It's about an hour by sun now. But you ha'nt axed me what I'll charge you for passage. That's jist like these man-o'-war folks, they get flush o' funds and think it'll last forever, and pay it out without axin' the price o' anything. I'll let you have half your passage money if you choose to lend a hand now and then to pull a rope; it'll keep you in exercise, and your hands from gettin' too tender."

"No, danger of that, captain," answered the young seaman, laughing; "I'll gladly give a helping hand, and pay you my full passage besides. I'll come on board, then, to-night. I am very glad you are going to sail so soon, as I was afraid that you coasters would keep in port for fear of the cruisers, till peace was fairly settled on both sides of the water."

"There'll be some six weeks yet afore we know whether the king accepts the terms; but in the meanwhile I don't fear the British a bit. Most of 'em know what is doin' toward bringing about a peace, and don't trouble themselves about such small fry as coasters, now; but I am told your frigate was fired into by a ship of the line, two days' before she got into port. Is that a fac'?"

"Yes—but we hoisted a truce flag to the main, and sent on board the information that negotiations for peace were going on; for the liner proved to be just from the Brazils, and knew nothing of it. So we parted without a battle. What passengers have you going down with you, Captain?"

"Well, there ain't many, any way—for some o' the folks feel a little skittish about venturing outside till all is signed and sealed ship-shape on both sides o' the sea; and, as it is, they won't insure me here in Bosting; but as I'm two-thirds owner, I run my risk; for the little 'Blue-Jay,' will out-sail, give her a fair chance, anything ever John Bull put keel to. There's only five passengers, master, and you'll make up the

round half-dozen. There's Deacon Stockwell, of our town, who's been up to buy goods, for he's a trader; he came up by land, but he got upset and jolted so pesky bad, that he means to go back with me, and trust to Providence for getting inter the mouth o' the river safe. Then, there's Seth Buzzel, as was taken prisoner, and was ten months in Dartmoor Black Hole. He's come home lately, and wants to get down among his 'lations 'bout Hallowell. Then there's Patty Soule, an old maid, who has been up to Bosting to get things for her shop, as she's a milliner and manty-maker, a nice, clever, homely body, that wouldn't hurt a fly. How many's that?"

"Three."

"There's two more, not countin' you; but they ain't yet come aboard. One of 'em is Squire Fairfield, one o' our richest farmers and traders in 'Gusta, and a young woman, or gal, as has been up to school, to get a Bosting education, piany, and all that, as is put under his charge. I see your young eyes brighten up just like all youngsters, when a young woman is spoken 'bout."

"Who is she, captain, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

"Wall, I never seed her; but they do say she is right smartly pretty. Her father is the old one-armed Major Sweatland, as fought at Plattsburg; but then you've been long away perhaps and don't know about it, I dare say!"

"No, I never heard of it before, sir. But if I am to be on board to-night, I'll have to see to my chest and get a few oranges, and a present or two for my mother, before the shops shut up."

"Try and be down here by eight o'clock, my man, and I'll have my yawl at the steps here for you! For that is the time the Squire and the young woman are coming down."

"I'll be here at the time, captain," cheerily answered the young sailor as he turned and walked away up the wharf.

The two persons, whose conversation we have above given, were very different in their personal appearance. The elder was a large boned man, spare of flesh, and with strongly formed features stamped with honesty and courage.

His age was about fifty, and Time had grizzled his dark locks and whitened his half-whiskers, which contrasted strikingly with the brown, weather-beaten skin of his visage. He had small, keen grey eyes, half-hidden by shaggy, grizzly brows, one of them being kept nearly shut by the habit of sharply looking out at sea. He stooped considerably in his shoulders, otherwise he would have been a tall man.

His dress consisted of a bell-topped beaver, showing the white edges of full three years careful keeping and brushing, and around it was bound a crape quite as ancient as the hat, and worn in memory of his wife; for Captain David Derrick was a widower of three and a half years continuance, without progeny. His body was clad in a long-skirted blue coat with bright buttons, tolerably new, though the seams of the garment were a little whiteish; his vest was of white dimity, prettily adorned with a figure of a green clover leaf, but now something faded; while his pantaloons, which were of olive-colored cassimere, had shrunk rather too small at the knee and were somewhat shorter than it was the custom to wear them, which brevity left a portion of his hairy leg about the ankle visible between the cassimerers and a pair of blue yarn socks, which his wife had knitted, and which he wore, upon dressed-up occasions, in honor of her memory.

As he had got through all his business in port, and was only waiting for a wind and to receive his passengers, he was now dressed up in his "go-to-meetings," as he called the suit of olive and blue we have so particularly described. To this suit he usually added a pair of deer-skin gloves, which he had bought the day before his marriage, seventeen years before, and which, being sported only on Sundays, and never having been worn for the good reason that he could never get them on, still served him to carry in his hand for display. These, however, were not now carried; but, instead, he held in his hand a huge silver turnip watch, with a long iron chain and formidable key and seal, as old-fashioned as the watch. With this ancient

watch held in his left hand, and his right touching the flat cornelian key, he had been pacing up and down the Long Wharf in Boston for full two hours before he is introduced to the reader addressing the young seaman. Now he would look at the clouds with a keen, studying glance, now cast his eyes upon the face of the watch, then lift them to the weather-cock at the top of his sloop's mast, and then fasten them again upon the watch. But this was Captain Derrick's habit at such times.—His attention was so equally divided between its face and the clouds, that an observer would have supposed that the change of wind depended on the minute and hour which he held in his hand.

At least, such was the opinion which a young man formed who had unobserved come down to the end of the pier, and seeing him thus engaged, paused to watch his movements, and not without a smile. This young man was about one and twenty, with a frank, sailor-like air, a face remarkably handsome, and lit up with a fine, clear hazel eye. His features were manly with all their beauty, but the dark brown skin redeemed them from any charge of effeminacy; as well as an expression of resolute daring; not the daring of recklessness, but that quiet courage which modestly shrinks from notice or display.

He was but little above the middling height, but finely formed, and carried himself with the free, nonchalant air of the true sailor.

In his dress there was plainly visible an eye to neatness and precision. His dark, brown locks were completely perfumed; and instead of being worn in a queue, as was the fashion among tars in that day, flowed negligently about his embroidered blue-shirt collar, on which was displayed the white naval anchor. He wore a side-lock on either cheek, that played upon it like a girl's ringlet. His ears had been pierced, but there were no rings in them now, whatever there might have been.

His flat, broad, blue shirt collar was loosely tied at the throat by a broad black ribbon, the ends of which hung down half a yard over the open shirt bosom, which was faced with blue. He wore no vest, but a blue jacket open before, and studded with a double row of small gilt buttons arranged as thickly as they could be placed together. On each cuff was also a row of six glittering buttons. Suspenders he had none, and his ample white trowsers, which were as wide as a fashionable petticoat, were kept up to his slender waist by a black polished belt, secured in front by a buckle. He wore white cotton hose, clocked, and morocco pumps garnished with paste buckles. The bottom of his wide trowsers nearly hid the small, neat foot, giving him that natty nautical appearance that only your true man-of-war's man can approximate to.

His tarpaulin was low in the crown, and narrow of brim, and shone like varnish; and being worn a little tipped on the left side of his head, increased not a little his sailor-like air. It was bound about with a broad ribband, the ends of which fluttered behind as he walked, like a brace of pennons.

His wrist was garnished with a fowl anchor, done in Indian ink, and the initials "W. A." enclosed in a wreath of ivy leaves; all very neatly and fancifully executed. About his little finger also was tattooed into the skin a blue ring representing two hearts locked together by a padlock. A device which would go far to disprove his denial touching sweet-hearts given in his reply to Captain Derrick. His hand, though looking as if it had not shrunk from toil, was small, and well-shaped, and were kept carefully neat. Altogether his appearance was prepossessing in the highest degree and any one who beheld him would say at once, that that young sailor loves the sea from his heart, and takes delight in being a sailor.

After he had looked long enough at the skipper, as he paced up and down the wharf, his watch in hand, he turned his attention to a small sloop with green upper-works and a blue and white double stripe about her waist, anchored about fifty rods from the wharf. She was about one hundred and thirty tons burden, looked quite new, was prettily and showily painted from stem to stern. Her mast was

strait as an arrow, and raked like a cutter's, and was crossed aloft by a topsail yard, the sail upon it being neatly furled, not hanging under as it is left usually in merchant vessels. The mainsail, which looked new, was hoisted to keep the vessel by aid of the wind filling it, from straining hard upon her cable and anchor, the ebb tide setting out strongly. Her bows were sharp and narrow, with a level bowsprit that poked its nose ahead with a saucy, inquisitive air. The white decks, the tastefully-painted companion-way and windlass, the green and black bulwarks, with the tidy arrangement of everything on board, were all apparent to the gratified eye of the young sailor from the place where he stood attentively observing them.

The eye of the captain of the sloop had also in the meanwhile fallen upon him; and after watching him for a few moments he addressed to him abruptly the question with which we have opened our story.

After the two had parted, the young sailor to seek his lodgings, the captain turned again to his watch and the clouds; and after watching the latter a few seconds, his eye brightened with satisfaction; and as he turned it to the west and saw the soft glowing tints of crimson mingled with gold that betokened a change of wind after the sun should go down, he put his watch back into his fob and said, exultingly,

"We shall have it now, and fair out of the south-west! While I have been talking here with this fine young sailor, the drift has changed six points and blows straight out to sea with the tide.

"Now I'll aboard and have supper, and I guess we'll be on blue water and well beyond Nick's Mate afore midnight."

With these words, the skipper once more pulled out his great watch to look at it, to see when midnight would be; for to his watch he had a habit of referring for everything; if asked about the weather, he would first look at his turnip; if asked how he did, he also consulted his watch.

CHAPTER II.

ON BOARD THE BLUE-JAY.

THE sun went down in that clear, golden sky which gives the promise of a fair night and morrow: while the wind, which had changed from a hard blow from the north, about an hour before, after a short lull began gently to breeze up from the south-west quarter. This was the very wind for which the skipper of the Blue-Jay, Captain David Derrick, had so long been anxiously looking for, watch in hand; and as he stood upon the deck of his vessel and felt the pleasant south-west air fanning his hardy-cheek, his small gray eyes twinkled with pleasure.

"That's the wind, True; and as soon as we get our passengers aboard, we'll weigh and run out," he said in a cheery tone to his mate, True Pike, a native Kennebecker, tall and stout in frame, though something ungainly in his make, with an open honest countenance of mingled simplicity and shrewdness.

"Yith, Captain Derrick," answered True as he took a long nine from his lips to reply, and ejected a formidable stream of tobacco juice over the bulwarks into the water along side; "the wind ith come at latht, and for one I'm pethky glad on't. Arter a craft geth all ready for thea it art no uthe and ony a aggravatin' thircumthanth to lay tied to an anchor thath thtuck fluke deep in the mud. I hopeth you'll give the order to weigh afore long."

"I'm ony waiting for my passengers, True; and I guess its pretty near time to send the boat to them are stairs. Yis, it's quarter to eight!" added the skipper, as he took his watch to the binnacle light and scrutinized its face.

The yawl, which had been in tow astern by its painter, was now hauled along side by the strong arms of the mate himself, and with a negro, the cook, and his only foremast hand, an Irishman, he got into her, and pulled for the dock.

Captain Derrick stood upon his deck watching her till she landed, and he then cast his eyes to the skies, carefully to

mark the appearance of the weather. It seemed to please him. Scarcely a cloud was visible, save a snowy cluster with silver edges, that floated in the east about the path of the rising moon, that began to fling its pleasant light over the waters of the harbor. Beneath her, and almost touching the lower limb, was suspended the evening star, brightly and steadily shining with unflickering beams, in placid contrast with the trembling lustre of the stars, which seemed to be each instant half extinguished to the eye, like a lamp in the wind.

"Yes, we shall have a fine night of it," repeated the skipper within himself; but he was answered by one of his passengers, who just then came up out of the cabin.

"The night is fine enough, and I fear too fine, captain," said this person, speaking in a broad nasal twang, and with a drawling pause upon each word.

"We can never have the weather too fine, Deacon Stockwell, never," responded the skipper, who had a habit of emphasising the last syllable of long words in a very peculiar way, and also of laying marked emphasis upon insignificant words, as *the* and *in* and *of*.

"No, no! I was thinking of the cruisers o' the inimy, captin'. They will be more likely to see us this night than if it was darkish like. I must confess I'm a little afeard on 'em."

"Not the least bit o' reason to be afeard in the world, Deacon; for since this truce or whatever it's called, they won't meddle with us at all. And haven't I in all the war been running 'tween Bosting and Kennebec, and never got took yet."

"But purty nigh it, more than once, captin': and lost a schooner too at that. You got your name up for bravery are that time, when you set your schooner a-fire, and 'scaped in the yawl. But I don't care about running such dangers, captin', and hope we shall make the passage across the bay down in safety; for you know it wouldn't be exactly proper for a Deacon o' the church to fight."

"Little danger on that pint, Deacon," answered the skipper drily; "but if your courage begins to fail, why it an't too late to go ashore and take the land craft down, as you come up."

"No, I'll keep with you now, captin', only I hope you'll hug the shore close, and not tempt the inimy with too much boldness."

The mate with the yawl, on reaching the steps, found seated upon them the young sailor, who had by his side a hammock rolled up into a huge bundle. He wore now, for the night was cool, a drab seaman's watch-coat.

"Is this the Blue-Jay's boat?" he hailed, as the yawl's bow touched the lower step.

"Wall, it ith; and what kind o' a Jay be you ath athks the quethtion in that thort o' orderin' hail?" responded True Pike, as he fastened the sharp, iron-shod boat-hook into the soggy timber of the wharf, and held the boat stationary.

"I am going down to the Kennebec in your sloop, and have just reached here in time to take your yawl on board," responded the sailor pleasantly.

"Wall, you can go, I thpose, though the captin' didn't thay ath there wath enny body to be tuck on board but Thquire Wetherel and a young woman; but you can come in! Up here, Blackey," he added to the African, "and give a hand to put the cheth aboard. You are a man-o'-warth man, I gueth!" and the mate eyed him and his baggage with admiring curiosity; for, though no belligerent himself True Pike had the greatest veneration and respect for every body who had seen wars and fights.

"Yes; I have just been discharged from the frigate you see off there."

The young man pointed to a dark-looking ship, with her tall spars relieved against the moonlight, reposing in silence in the entrance to Charles River.

"I guethed tho. I'm glad your goin' down with uth, coth I'd like to hear about your cruith and the battleth you've been in; for they do thay that are frigate hath had

all-fired hard fighting thinth the bein' out, and tuck more than twenty prizeth."

"We have done pretty well, sir," answered the young man, as with the aid of the negro he placed his chest and hammock in the bottom of the boat forward, where also he took his stand.

"You're then from Kennebec, I gueth?" observed Truce, with genuine Yankee inquisitiveness, though his inquiry was put in a respectful way; for there was something about the young man that prevented him, mate of the good sloop Blue-Jay as he was, from treating him as a common seaman.

"Yes, I was born there," answered the young man, in that quiet tone and easy, affable manner, that seemed natural to him, and which had something in them that won at once the confidence and interest of all about him.

"Then I dare say I know your father down there," added True, as if he was fishing to learn his name.

"Perhaps so," answered the sailor, who at the same moment directed his attention up the wharf, from the head of which came audibly to the ears of both the rattling sound of carriage wheels.

"That must be the passengers you are waiting for, sir," said the young seaman, as he stepped from the bow of the boat upon the stairs and ascended them, followed by the mate.

"Yeth, I reckon it ith, for it ith time they were down here and aboard. I've heard Captain Derrick's feeth pathing the deck the lath quarter of an hour, just as he always doth when he ith impatient."

"I've been eethpectin' every moment to hear him holler to me to come on board and not wait for the passengers another minit. Every thecond of thith wind ith worth a copper thent to us."

"Yes, and of the night too; for I suppose that the passage will be made with less danger of cruisers in the night. But I dare say there are none that trouble you now."

"Well," responded Truce in a slow way, "there ain't no tellin' what'll happen. The Britith are pethky thlipery, and ith eathy enough to take a prize, and than they didn't know ath peath was bein' made at Washington and London."

"The terms of the Truce will be strictly observed by all who hear of them, I have no doubt," answered the sailor. "Still it is best to keep way and not run great risks. Have there been many cruisers of late on the coast?"

"Wall, a purty conthiderable chanthe on em, conthiderin'; but I ant heard o' none for the lath two weeth; and we reckon ath how the hard noreather then blowed em off the coath and they've put into Halfaeth to repair damageth. Tho' we mean to take advantage o' their abthenth and make the run acroth the bay to-night! But here comth the coach. I hope it ith the Thquire and the young woman."

At this moment the carriage which had been heard for some minutes driven rapidly down the long pier came close in sight, and the next instant drew up at the top of stairs, while an elderly, bald-headed gentleman thrust out his head, on which the moon-light roundly glistened, and said hastily, as he looked off at the sloop,

"We ant too late, Grace! There lays the Blue-Jay still at anchor; and bless me! here is Mr. Pike, the mate, with a boat waiting for us! Good evening, Mr. Pike. I got a sudden message from Captain Derrick that the wind was fair and that I must be down at eight without fail. I hope I have not kept you waiting!" and he took out of his fob a large, heavy gold watch and looked at it by the light of the moon. "It is just ten minutes after eight. Coachman, take off the trunks and be careful of that band-box; but first let us out, for the worthy mate here don't understand the fastenings."

The coachman came and relieved the mate from an unsuccessful attempt to open the carriage door, and a stout, pleasant faced, middle-aged gentleman stepped actively out, and then turned and extended both arms to assist a young lady to alight.

"No, no, Squire," she said, with a musical laughing voice, "I can get out very well without your aid, at least I only want one of your hands to help me!"

"Bless my spectacles! One would think I was nothing more nor less than a young lover and you were afraid to trust me too far!" answered the gentleman, pleasantly; "so then there is my fore-finger—lean upon that."

But the maiden had already lightly bounded to the ground, and looking off upon the moonlit waters of the bay, with its circle of dark islands, and black-looking, silently anchored vessels upon its bosom, she stood gazing upon the scene with an expression upon her beautiful face of surprise and pleasure. It was indeed a spectacle to arrest the eye of taste; the deep blue water, the isles, the skies above, with their stars and the moon filling heaven, earth and sea with its cloudless radiance.

"How lovely—how grand!" escaped from her lips unconsciously.

The words reached no ears but those of the young sailor, who, from the moment she alighted, had been transfixed as if with admiration, and remained near the stairs, observing her with the most intense earnestness. Her graceful figure, clad in a royal-blue traveling habit, was finely displayed in every wave of its charming outline; and the features of her youthful countenance, on which the pure moonlight fell, seemed to his imagination too beautiful for earth. He watched with a throbbing heart, and a pulse bounding with new and happy sensations, the changing expression of that lovely face, which like a mirror reflected the deepest emotions of her heart and mind.

The exclamation of surprise and delight at the unexpected scene which she suddenly beheld before her, on alighting from the coach, reached his ears alone; for the Squire was bustling about the baggage, and the mate was getting into the yawl as fast as he could. Glancing at their movements, and seeing it would be some minute or two before they would get it all into the boat, the maiden walked to the end of the pier to command a wider and more open prospect of the bay, for the beautiful in nature seemed to find a ready echo in her soul.

The young sailor hitherto had not been noticed by her, as a post partly hid him from view; but as she advanced she saw him before he could quickly enough withdraw, and place the post against which he had been leaning between her and himself. Upon seeing him, she started back a step, as if alarmed at so unexpectedly coming upon a stranger.

CHAPTER III.

A SAIL BY MOONLIGHT.

THE young girl stood her ground, as if she had too much good sense and courage to retreat, and gazed upon the youthful stranger for a minute with blushing and surprise, for she knew that he must have been watching her face as she was admiring the harbor scenery, and she felt a little vexed at having given way to rapture in the presence of an observer; and one too, who, as the moonlight revealed his countenance to her, she saw was young and handsome, though habited as a seaman.

The youth felt as if he had been guilty of a rudeness, and raising his tarpaulin from his head, he bowed low and passed her to the stair-head. There was in his appearance, and in the silent but graceful manner with which he apologised to her for so freely gazing upon her face, that caused her to regard him a second time with more particularity, as she obeyed the call of the Squire to come and let him help her into the boat. To reach it she passed him again on the stairs, where he stood as if ready to offer her his assistance, should it be required, yet without any appearance of being obtrusive. The baggage being all in, the mate held the boat firmly to the side of the stair-landing, while the Squire, taking the hand of the young lady carefully began to assist her down the slippery descent. For the eb-

bing tide had left the steps wet and slimy, and therefore, perilous to the foot.

"Be careful, Squire," said the maiden, in badinage, "or you will slip and tumble with me into the water, you are so heavy; you had best see to getting safely down yourself, and let me manage as I can."

"I have more gallantry than that, Miss Grace," answered the squire: "come, put your foot steadily down and lean hard on my arm, and you will go safe." But here, unfortunately for his word, at this moment his foot slipped from under him, and the squire took the rest of the stairs on his back; and, but for the presence of mind of the young girl, he would have taken her with him; but, as she found him going, and saw that he seemed disposed to adhere to her, she released her hand and clung to the railing, where she stood merrily laughing to see the fat gentleman's further descent, which was terminated by the stout mate, who, catching him as he came down, in his strong arms, tossed him bodily into the stern of the boat, with

"Beg pardon, thquire, but if I hadn't done thith you'd rolled into the dock."

"No apology, Master Pike—none in the world, sir," responded the squire, as he got actively to his feet sound as ever. "I am only mortified: and there is that mad minx ready to die laughing at my clumsiness. Ah, laugh away, Miss Grace. I see that I am an awkward beau. If I had been twenty years younger—but never mind. I have been. Don't come down alone. Master Pike, I'll get you to go up and take her in your arms and bring her down safely."

"I gueth that young man 'll be quith ath ectheptable to the mith," responded the mate, as he saw the man-of-war's man, who had sprung to her side on seeing her left alone midway the steep stairs, offering her his aid.

"No, sir—don't trouble yourself, sir," she answered, as the young seaman respectfully and blushing tendered her his assistance; "I can easily get down alone."

"The stairs are very dangerous. I fear you will slip without aid," he said earnestly.

"There is my hand, then, sir," she answered, giving it to his grasp.

With the most tender caution the young sailor led her step by step down the precipitous descent and placed her safely in the stern of the boat.

"I thank you," she answered, as she raised her fine eyes to the face of the handsome, diffident young sailor, as he reluctantly released the soft, warm hand which had communicated a new warmth and life to his blood. The words were but three in number, and were spoken in a very low tone: but they went to his heart of hearts and his spirit to its very depths.

"Push off, Blackey, and take to your oar, Phil," were the words with which his meditations were suddenly interrupted. "Thtoop down, my man, or your head will thtrike that brig'th martingale at the end o' the wharf."

He stooped in time to avoid the collision as the boat passed beneath the bowsprit, and took a seat on the gunwale, with his eyes stealing toward the moonlit face of the beautiful girl, who was making herself mirthful over the Squire's tumble down the stairs.

The boat was now along side the sloop, and the skipper came to the gang-way, and, catching the painter, secured it, and said as he looked over the side—

"One, two, three! All here! Well I am glad you have come, Squire, for this is as fine a wind as ever one would wish to see; and I have been impatient to get my anchor up and away! Jump aboard, Mister Pike, and have the windlass manned, and the jib up at once.—We must lose no time. Ah, Miss, your humble servant!" he added, as he extended his hand to assist her on board, the Squire having refused to aid her, saying with a laugh, he feared he should the next time, not only fall himself, but drag her with him too. The young seaman involuntarily stepped forward to assist, but nodding to him with a smile, she bounded upon the deck of the little packet.

The Squire having followed, the baggage, was taken on board the yawl, dropped astern to tow, and the skipper, telling the Squire to make himself at home in the cabin, went forward to assist in getting the sloop under-weigh; for besides the mate and the cook, who went by the name of Blackey or "Doctor," and the Irishman, there was but one other hand, and he a half-witted lad of one-and-twenty, with a long white down, that had never known razor on his upper lip, and straggling over his fat chin.

The Squire having seen the baggage safely placed on deck, followed his fair charge, who had gone aft alone, her every motion regarded by the eyes of the enamoured young sailor; for the heart of the handsome man-of-war's man was completely taken captive.

Instead of going at once into the cabin, she walked towards the stern of the vessel, and stood there a few moments in silence gazing upon the scene about her. The dark outline of the city rose in bold relief into the sky, with its interlacing fringe of masts, presenting a magnificent object to the eye; and the sparkling waves of the bay that laved its shores danced and glanced and sang musically around the sloop, while the fresh wind filled and refilled the huge flapping main-sail above her head, and seemed to reprove the delay of the vessel to put out to sea. It was a scene novel, and full of interest to the fair girl, and she seemed to enjoy it fully. The bright white moonlight reflected upon the sails, the delicate black lines of shadow pencilled across the deck by the ropes, the men as they hove the anchor, all added to the enjoyment of the scene. For a moment she forgot that she was not alone; but the voice of the squire by her side assured her of his companionship.

"What a romantic girl you seem to be, Miss Grace," said he, as he saw her eye wandering with a pleased expression from object to object. "Here you are staying here on deck in the night air, when there is one of the nicest cabins, and all ready for you—every thing below to make you comfortable, and you have not even been down to see it!"

"I knew that you had cared for all these things, Squire, and so felt no anxiety," she answered smiling.

"True, I have done so; for when I was down this morning, I saw that every thing was just as nice as it could be fixed—I want you to see it."

"It is such a beautiful night! I will go soon—it is pleasanter on deck."

"Moonlight is plenty enough in Kennebec, and full as good as that up to Boston; so don't think that you are looking your last on it."

"What an idea! But see how grandly the masses of the city rise, roof on roof, till yonder shining dome crowns all so magnificently!"

"I have seen it a hundred times, girl!"

"But not by moonlight!"

"By sunlight, which is a thousand times brighter for my eyes. I can't conceive now, Miss Grace, what pleasure you can take in looking at any thing so half-seen as things by moonlight. Give me broad day. The night air is absolutely damp! See the dew sparkling on the top of the bulwarks. You will catch your death if you stay here!"

"Salt water dew never hurt any body, Squire," said the skipper, who just now came aft to put the helm hard up to ease the anchor which was nearly a-peak. "Let her stay on deck till we get by the castle and islands, for Boston harbor never looks so well as it does by the light of the full moon. It is only beautiful places that moonlight helps in my opinion, Squire!"

"Anchor a-peak!" cried the mate.

"Hoist the jib! and then get her up," cried the skipper, as he brought the helm amidships.

The Squire now became too much interested in watching the preparations for getting underweigh to urge the young lady further, and she noticed every movement with keen interest, and the delight which new scenes and novelty always inspires in a cultivated and well-regulated mind.

The jib was soon spreading its snow-white, triangular

surface to the breeze, swelling out proudly as if the onward progress of the vessel depended solely on its agency; but the huge main-sail as the bow fell off from the wind now began to draw steadily and cease its flapping, and a moment afterwards by the aid of the mate and the young man-o-war's man who actively volunteered his services, the topsail was unloosed to the sportive winds and spread its square white field to their steady pressure.

The anchor was now got upon the bow and each sail sheeted so as to draw freely, while the little vessel feeling the power of the viewless breeze began to plough her way, at first slowly, along the surface of the dark waters.

"With this we shall be able to lay our course till we pass the Graves," said the skipper, as the sloop, fairly underweigh, stretched down the harbor.

The deep tones of the city bells as they rang out nine o'clock, the hour for all good citizens to find themselves at home, if not abed, came borne across the water to the ears of the passengers as they glided rapidly down the harbor. Their mingled notes sounding in the distance, were as soft as the mellow keys of a glassi-chord.

"It is nine o'clock up town, and I meant to have got off, and out-side, by this time," said the skipper, addressing no one in particular of his passengers, who were all on deck, enjoying the beauty of the hour and the sail. There was Deacon Stockwell seated on one end of a barrel, and quietly smoking his short pipe, and on the other end sat Patty Basset, the ancient maiden, a mantua-maker, in her shawl and hood; a short, fleshy, stout woman of forty, with a homely, good-natured face, and rather a masculine appearance. Opposite to them, on the hen-coop, was seated the Squire, who was amusing himself with watching the lights disappear, one after another, in the town; and upon a bale of goods near him, a little forward, sat Seth Buzzel, the marine, who had been prisoner in Dartmoor, and who was one arm less, having lost it in an engagement at sea. He was smoking a pipe, very black, and filled with very strong tobacco. On the larboard side of the deck, leaning against the bulwarks, and thoughtful, watching the gliding by of the indistinct scenery of island and main, stood the maiden, who had been placed for the passage under the protection of the gallant Squire.

She seemed to be absorbed in the lovely night-scene around, and through which she was rapidly borne on the wings of the wind.

The sixth passenger, the young man-of-war's man, was pacing the deck, to and fro amidships, now glancing ahead to see how the sloop progressed, now and more frequently fixing his eyes upon the graceful figure of the maiden, as she leaned musingly over the vessel's side, the beautiful outline of her face defined in the clear radiance of the moonbeams.

Forward stood the mate with the slack of the jib-sheet in his hand, carefully watching his sails, and ready to obey the orders from the skipper to "ease off," or "haul aft," as the irregularity of the channel rendered a momentary change of the sloop's course necessary. Lolling upon the windlass were the Irishman, Phil O'Flinn, and the half-idiot youth already mentioned. The African, with his shining black face thrust out of his caboose, was blowing a live coal in a pair of tongs at which he lighted a long Marblehead cigar, and then seating himself upon his dish-tub in the door of his caboose, proceeded to take his comfort.

Such was the scene on board; upon all which shone brightly down the clear moon, casting a net-work of shadowy lines across the snow-white decks, and silvering the broad wing-like sails. About the bows the parted waves hissed and gurgled, and far astern foamed and sparkled the creamy wake of her path.

CHAPTER IV.

OUT OF THE HARBOR.

THE seaman stood near the mate.

"There is little apprehension from any cruisers in a stern

chase, sir," he said to the mate, stopping in his walk by him. "I see your sloop is a very fast sailer."

"She ith nothing elthe," dryly answered the mate, though evidently not a little pleased at the commendation; for a sailor loves to have his vessel commended better than himself.

"I don't apprehend any danger from cruisers now," answered the sailor; and I trust, at least for the sake of this lovely lady, that we shall fall in with none of them."

"Well, she ith haandthome. I've theen a young deer, now, up at the forkth of the Kennebec that looked jith like her."

"A deer look like a woman?" exclaimed the seaman with surprise.

"Never see a deerth eye that I don't think o' a womanth," answered the mate; "but it ant every woman ath hath god an eye half ath fine ath a deer. But thith young lady hath an eye like a deer: but her figure is what motht remindth me o' one. She hath the flame way o' carryin' her head and lookin' and movein'. I tell you the nearer a woman lookth like a deer, the finer woman she ith. That ithe the pinion o' True Pike; and I ought to know, for I wath born in woodth and hunted deer till I wath a man grown."

"And how came you to become a seaman, sir?"

"Wall I ant naucht of a theaman any way, bein' I never wath out of sight o' land, thept in a fog, and couldn't help it. I took to loggin', you thee, and one day I tharted on a raft from the upper country, about Dead River, to come down; and when I got as far ath Augutha and had picked up the thray logth, and thold out, I thot I'd go thee Both-ton, and took a workin' passage on a lumber vethel; and ater that I somehow kind o' liked it, and I've been thicking to it ever since."

"Haul aft the jib a little, and a small pull on the main-sheet, Mister Pike," called out the Captain from the helm.

"Aye, aye, thir. Phil, come aft with me to the jib, and you, Blacky, tend thith jib."

"Ott's now and ot'll Jim do, cozz?" asked a shrill voice in a whining key: and the young sailor beheld a long, lanky figure advance from the shadow of the mast, at the foot of which it had a little while before coiled itself, and stand looking after the mate with an expression upon his vacant countenance of mingled woe and wonder; for these were the emotions which seemed to be stamped upon his face indelibly and unchangeably; woe, as if some inward grief; wonder, as if he was constantly in a state of surprise at every thing that occurred, however trivial.

"Ots' now? and ot'll Jim do, cozz?" he repeated a second time, looking first after the mate, and then addressing the young sailor.

"I don't understand you," he answered him, and surveyed him with curiosity. He was clad in a short gray jacket much too small for him, as it hardly descended four inches below his arm pits; in a long striped vest, that was as much too large and long, as his jacket was small; and in a pair of kerseymere small clothes, tied at the knee, with dirty red ribbons, instead of buckles.

His stockings were of coarse blue yarn, and fitted tightly the small calf of his long leg, the ancles of which were enormous protrusions of bone, like knots upon a pine-tree. His feet, of length proportioned to the ancles, created to support them, were thrust into a pair of cow-skin bootees, one tied with spun-yarn, the other free from all bonds.

The personage was not one inch under six feet high, and his head being as small as a child's, made his length seem even greater than it was, very light complexioned, with whitey hair, that grew straight on his forehead; and his eye-brows, and eye-lashes, were also white; while, as has been said already, he wore a whitish unshorn beard on his lip and chin, that gave him a savage aspect; but never was a more harmless being known.

He had just wit enough to keep him from mistaking water for solid ground, and in helping him to find the way to his mouth, which it seemed he never could fill with food sufficient. He had somehow come upon the town after the death of his idolizing mother, two years before, and as he

ate more than all the other inmates of the parish put together, the selectmen resolved to get rid of the expense of his maintenance; so he was put up to auction, a bona fide sale, and out of compassion our skipper bought him, paying one penny, the price set upon him; but David Derrick saw that he was strong and docile, and knew that with kindness he might be made serviceable on board his vessel. So he had been with the skipper ever since; to his name, "Jim," sometimes being added, the surname of "Penny," by his messmates. He was never known to get angry, to quarrel, or to disobey. He was a mere animal machine, with the face of a whipped school-boy. He had but few words, and these ill-pronounced and shrilly articulated, in an unpleasant voice. He seemed to love no one, and to fear no one but his master, the skipper; and his relation to him seemed to be perfectly comprehended by his dark mind; but rather felt through his heart than his intellect.

The skipper petted him, and never was known to speak unkindly or sharply to him. The poor boy was active and ready to do duty on board, and as he seemed to be unable to understand all that was spoken, when an order was given he would cry hurriedly, with a look of distress and eager curiosity—

"Ot's now? and ot'll Jim do, cozz?"

This was his invariable question, and he always terminated it with the syllable "cozz," the meaning of which or use, no one could get him to explain. It appeared to be merely a habit without a meaning.

"What'll Jim do? Ot's now?" he added with eagerness, as the sailor stared at him with surprise.

"Nothing, Jim, go forward and keep the heel o' the bowsprit from flying up," said the mate quietly, as he came again to the spot he had left.

"What, and who is he?" asked the sailor.

"A poor innothent—cracked here!" answered the mate, touching his forehead significantly.

"Och, Mister Pike, it's all smooth and even we're goin now," said the Irishman, pulling at the waistband of his velvetens; "isn't it the time for a drap o' the crathur wid us forrerd."

"Yith, Phill, go and get your dipper for yourthelf and Blackey."

"Here am de tin pot, massa mate," cried the ebony cook, thrusting the dipper towards him, while his teeth shone with a smile of anticipation. "Full um up right smart, massa Pike!"

"I'll take care you don't get more nor your lwoanth, Blackey," responded the mate, as he went aft, and descended to the locker. The young sailor also walked aft, but with diffidence; but they were at the moment passing the Castle with its snow-white walls, on which the moon shone; and he wished to hear what was said by the fair girl, whose richly keyed-voice he heard in conversation with the skipper.

The sloop was now fairly abreast the Castle; and so nigh that the flag-staff could even be distinguished. The sight of the war-like exterior of the fortress with its deep embrasures frowning with black cannon, its sentries pacing to and fro upon the walls, their musket barrels gleaming in the moonlight that displayed this war-like scene, deeply impressed the susceptible mind of the young girl who had never before been upon the water. Never had she beheld such objects of interest as then and since she had been on board the sloop had passed before her charmed sight. The Squire catching an exclamation of surprise and pleasure from her lips, drawn from her by the beautiful appearance of the fort, the walls of which shone like silver, drew near her and proceeded to explain the features of the prospect around; while the skipper occasionally put in a word where the Squire's knowledge was at fault.

"This is the strongest fort in the country, Miss Grace, and in all this war not a British vessel has dared to make the attempt to pass it. I wish it was day-light that you might see it better!"

"Oh, I think it more beautiful by the moonlight, Squire," she answered, not without a smile. "You may have the sun and I will have the moon always!"

"Suppose you had a lover, Miss Grace—nay, only supposing the thing, for no doubt you have a good many, or soon will have, for you will be sure to turn the heads of all our Kennebec youths; suppose you had a lover, and the day and all was fixed for the wedding—"

"There, Squire, that will do!"

"No, no, hear me out, Miss Grace; suppose instead of himself he should send you his picture to be married to you! how would you like that?"

"It would be a very odd sort of a husband, but a very submissive one, I dare say!"

"Would you take the picture for the lover himself, Miss Grace?"

"I don't know, but I think I should rather have my lover alive!" she answered, archly.

"There I have you now, hav'nt I, Captain Derrick?"

"Pray, my dear Squire, what have you been driving at?"

"Trying to convince you that moonlight compared with sun-light, is only a humbug. The moon is but the picture of the sun!"

"How poetical you are become, Squire!"

"I knew I should convince you!"

"It is hard to convince a woman, Squire!" she said laughingly.

"Bless my spectacles! I believe you say true. If I had known what a wild dangerous girl you were with your ready speech I should have thought twice before taking you under my charge. But as I have promised your uncle that I will get you safe to him, I will try to do my best!"

"Don't be afraid of me, Squire. I will be as gentle and yielding as you can desire; only this I insist upon that moonlight is the only light in which to look at beautiful scenery with advantage!"

"Dear souls me!" ejaculated the Squire; "they always will have the last word!"

"Do you see that pair of twin-hills to the west and south, Miss?" asked the skipper, bending and looking beneath the main-boom.

"Yes, sir. I have been admiring their fine dark outline. What are they?"

"Dorchester Heights! If the moonlight was a little stronger on 'em, you'd see the square forts that Washington throw'd up in one night, and which skeared the British so in the city when they see them staring down on them; and three days afterward their General, Lord Howe, give up the city, being convinced he couldn't hold it no longer; and he was afeared to try and dislodge the 'Mericans coz he hadn't forgot the Battle on Bunker Hill!"

"I have been on Bunker Hill, and saw there General Warren's monument," said the Squire.

"Wall," observed Deacon Stockwell, who had been hitherto silent, "this war is jist over——"

"Not quite over yit, Deacon, by your leave," interrupted the skipper with emphasis, yet with that respect in his manner due always to a deacon, who was, withal rich and a merchant. "The Treaty o' Peace as has been sent over sea hasn't been rat—rat—rat——"

"Ratified, sir," interloated the Squire with an air.

"Ratified, that's *the* word, and a funny word it is too to use for sich two great nations makin' a peace. But that's neither here nor there! What I was sayin', deacon, is that the war ant quite ended till the peace is ratified over the big ocean."

"But it's purty well understood by both sides it will be," resumed the Deacon. "But let me say, if you please, Captain, what I was abont to when you interrupted me."

"Begg a hundred pardons, deacon."

"Not in the least, captin'. Speakin' o' Bunker Hill, I was goin' to say that this war jist abont endin' has had its great battle hills and battle-fields as well as the old war."

"That is true, deacon, if the minister had said it," responded the skipper. "A little more on the jib sheet, Mr. Pike, and a small touch at the lee topsail-brace. Yes, deacon, you say true. This war has increased our glory by land and sea."

"It has showed we haven't degenerated in courage from our fathers," observed the Squire, looking quite imposing.

"Yes; we have proved that it is nat'ral for us to fight here in the States, and that John Bull don't rake the sea after all his boastin'. But here we be close down upon Nick's Mate. Do you see that monument, Miss?"

"Yes, sir!" answered the maiden, who had been watching the receding city as it melted into the obscurity of night and of distance, and taking leave in her heart of the friends among whom for years she had been cherished and loved. Tears were in her eyes when she turned to reply to the captain, and the young sailor saw them, for he had stood worshipping her in silence. When he beheld the tears glittering like diamonds upon her cheek and eye-lids, his own spirit became sorrowful for her; and his heart instinctively bounded to give its sympathy to her.

"That monument, Miss," resumed the skipper, "is put up there to show where an awful murder was committed on the high seas."

"If it was committed on the high seas," remarked the deacon, "how could it have been on that rock?"

"The murder was committed on board a ship, and the body was buried where the monument stands, deacon. That can be, can't it?" rather sharply retorted the skipper.

"Who committed the deed, captain, and who was the person murdered?" asked the maiden, as she gazed on a dark pile of stone that was washed on all sides by the waves, and which seemed to rise from the midst of the channel.

"The name o' the place, Miss, tells the whole story in two words—the murder and the murdered. It is called, as I said, 'Nick's Mate.' You must know that there was in the old Bay times a famous pirate called Captain Nick, though folks say his real name was Nickerson, and for short his people called him Nick. Well one day he was layin' off the harbor here waitin' to capture a Plymouth trader as was bound down to old Plymouth from Boston here; and so he tuck her, coz there was no resistin', and robbed her o' all her goods, and she had a purty valable cargo in, coz most o' the goods was for the store-keepers at the old Colony town; and Nick knowed this, I dare say."

"No doubt. I hope we shall fall in with no such people, captain," and the skipper looked round to his private passengers, for Miss Patty Basset was one of the audience, and said,—

"I fear I'm getting on a scary subject, considerin' we've got two women folks on board. But never mind, there aint no Nicks about now, ladies."

"Except Old Nick," remarked the Squire, facetiously.

"It is not right to touch lightly on religious subjects, Squire Wetherel," observed the deacon, gravely, and looking very sober.

"Go on, captain, and tell us all about it, we are none of us cowards," said the maiden.

"That is good stuff, and what I like, Miss. So I will tell you."

"The Pirate, you see, took a fancy to have this young lady for his wife, for she was amazin' handsome, they say, eenamost as pretty as Miss Grace, here, p'raps; but she did *not* like him, as was natural she shouldn't, and he swore she should marry him or he'd kill her father; and there was a Catholic priest in the vessel he always carried, to keep, as he said, as near heaven as he could, and he said this priest should perform the ceremony. But she took on so dreadfully, that the mate pitied her, and took her part, and said he would protect her with his life."

CHAPTER V.

THE PIRATES.

THE sloop having passed the "Nick's Mate," while the skipper was relating its history, the channel took a more easterly course, which rendered it necessary to alter the

drawing of the sails, and put the helm to starboard. When these changes were effected the skipper resumed his narration, his passengers all listening with attention, the Deacon smoking, the old maid knitting, and the Squire leaning on the top of his silver-headed cane; while the young lady rested in a graceful, natural manner against the gently rocking boom, that moved with a yielding swing to the just perceptible swell of the sea; for they were fast leaving the still waters of the island-locked harbor behind them.

A few feet from her, forward, stood the young sailor, his arm resting upon the bulwarks, and near him the one-armed marine, who had been compelled to vacate his place on the hen-coop, on account of the boom, had taken his stand and remained closely regarding his features, as if studying out a resemblance. The mate and the hands remained forward, ready to execute the orders of the Captain.

The Captain now continued his story as follows:

"The pirate's mate had no sooner declared himself in favor of the maiden, than to back him he called on such of the pirates as were his friends to stand by him, saying that he would slay Captain Nick, and himself be their chief.

About a dozen joined him, but they were only a few compared with the rest, and, Nick seeing this, told them that if they would return to their duty, he would forgive them, if not, they would be shot. They found that there was no use in holding out, and quickly gave up their weapons, leaving the mate standing alone. Nick then went up to him, and putting a pistol at his breast, fired a ball right through his heart, and he fell down dead on the spot."

"How dreadful!" ejaculated the Deacon.

"The noble fellow! He deserved a better fate!" said Grace Sweetland, for such was the maiden's name.

The words, and the enthusiastic way in which she uttered them, pleased the young sailor, and, if possible, made him think more dearly of her than before.

"What a blood-thirsty villain he was!" said the Squire.

"What befell the poor young lady?"

"That is best of all," answered the skipper, "and you will see, Miss, that though the brave mate died, he yet, by his interference, saved the young lady."

"How could it be? I am so happy to hear that she escaped!" said Grace, with animation.

"She did escape, Miss, and the mate was the means of it; for you see that the two vessels was layin' together, the trader right astern of the pirate, and the wind blowin' hard from the South, so that they came near parting the hawsers that tied her more than once. Well, while the quarrel about her was goin' on, the young girl had broke away from Nick who held her, and sprung on board the trader to her father again; and he, having his daughter once more in his possession, seized an axe and cut one of the hawsers, and the other parted in an instant, so that the trader got clear of the pirate. The skipper took the helm, made all sail, and put dead away afore the wind with the pirate after him but the trader got safe into Plymouth. So you see after all that the brave mate saved her. Nick buried him where that monument is!"

"What a pity he died!" said the maiden, with feeling, as she looked long and earnestly back at the dark tomb. "She might have rewarded him some day with her hand if she had lived."

"She would never have married a pirate," said the Squire.

"Besides she was so far above him, never if he had been an honest seaman."

"I had forgot in the nobleness of his conduct that he was a pirate. True she could not have loved a man of crime. But the fact that she was high-born and he humble, would not be a consideration, sir, that should sway an instant with a true-hearted girl in the scale of gratitude."

"Well spoken, Miss," said the skipper. "I am glad rich as you are, and Boston eddicated, to see that you are not spoiled and above board. I shall always like you for that ere speech."

"And so shall I," was the mental ejaculation of the youthful sailor, who heard with indescribable joy the words she gave utterance to so honestly and so boldly. "What a

noble creature she is! Every moment I am becoming more and more enchanted.

"But I shall not fear to love her now, though she may never know that a heart here beats for her, that would pour forth its current of life to serve her. What good angel put those sweet words, so full of hope and comfort for me, upon her lips. Never shall I forget them. They are engraven upon my soul forever."

"It is such sentiments that sometimes make young ladies marry badly and beneath themselves," said the Deacon, severely. "It is such ideas in young girls' heads that make so many run-away matches we hear of; you must have a care, Miss. I have three daughters; and have brought them up so that they will never marry except that I choose for them, ahem!"

"Three old girls, Miss Grace," whispered Patty Bassett, "the youngest is thirty-one; and the Deacon has brought 'em up; so they think it is a real sin to get married; for I've no doubt they have had offers in their day. He has 'em under his thumb now, just as much as when they were children; they stand in mortal fear of him. I know 'em for they buy at my shop. Real old prudes! I knew one of them to scream at the sight of a man's hat on my shop table. But then, poor things, they were brought up so."

Grace smiled to hear one, who was an old maid herself, talk so freely touching the class so much abused, yet so useful and honorable; but they were prevented making further acquaintance by the remark made by the Squire who seemed to have been for some minutes in a state of profound reflection.

"You said, captain, pirates never venture out in war-times."

"Wall, I guess I say what is pretty near true, Squire. It is war which makes pirates: that is a sartin. But they don't show themselves while the ocean is full o' cruisers."

"War makes pirates, captain?" said the deacon, in a tone of surprise. "How do you make that out?"

"Easy enough, deacon. You see there is a good many men as follows the sea at sich times as is thrown out of employ, when peace comes, especially privateersmen. Now it is pesky hard for men when they have been lawling it on the wide sea and get a taste for fightin' and capturin' to turn again quiet to honest land callings. Some of 'em want more money and more plunder. Peace comes too soon for 'em, and so they prolong the war on their own account, and take all the prizes that comes in their way."

"In a word, become pirates. I understand you now, captain," said the deacon, as if perfectly satisfied.

"We are likely then to have a batch of them after this war," said the Squire.

"I hope we shall get safely into the Kennebec river first, Squire," said Grace, laughing. "You remind me, all of you, captain and all, of a group of children got together frightening each other with ghost stories."

"Bless me, so we are, girl," responded the Squire. "It is a delicate subject, pirates, situated as we are on a passage across an open bay. Dear souls me. What, between danger from buccaneers, cruisers, and gales, we had better have taken the land route down."

"I hope you will keep the coast close ahead, captain," said the deacon, who began to look alarmed as he saw the land astern fast sinking into the sea. "It strikes me you are running needlessly far out."

"I must clear Nahant head, and also Cape Ann, gentlemen," answered the captain. "There's not a bit of danger, I can beat anything. The Blue-Jay would get ahead o' the wind if I didn't hold her in by the jib-sheets, and get becalmed."

"Captin'," said the marine, Seth Buzzel, edging up, and seating himself on the corner of the companion-way, "you said as how pirates aint seen about in war time."

"Wall," responded the captain, looking at him keenly: "what have you to say, Master Seth? Have you seen any in your wanderin's?"

"I rayther guess I have, and not a great while ago, neither," responded the man in a positive way.

"Where was it, sir?" asked the Squire, whose curiosity was easily excited.

"Now, Squire, you are going to frighten each other more," said the young lady, laughing.

"Me frightened? I consider myself, Miss Grace, a brave man. I might have been Colonel in our regiment if I'd have served."

"I don't doubt your courage, Squire; but really I won't answer for mine; so if this gentleman in the uniform jacket chooses to go on with his story, I'll walk away and leave you to listen."

This was spoken more playfully than in earnest; yet nevertheless she did as she said, and walked forward and came and stopped by the young sailor, who was standing leaning against the bulwarks, near the top-mast-stay. Upon seeing her approach, he knew not whether to stand still or retreat; but his confusion was too great for him to decide, ere she came opposite him. She remained a moment gazing up at the swelling topsail, as the breeze rounded its snowy field. She did not seem to take notice of the presence of the young man, though she might have heard the wild beating of his heart; for he was not four feet distant from her. He had an opportunity of gazing his fill upon her pure, glorious brow, as the moonbeams fell upon it, lending it a lustre that seemed angelic in its brightness. He could see the delicate arch of the dark brow, the beautiful eye beneath, in which danced the moonbeams, and the rich, ripe, yet exquisitely curved lips, just parted as she looked intently upward, seemingly watching the tall point of the mast, as rocked by the waves it traced invisible curved lines among the stars.

Suddenly she turned toward him and said with sweet grace:

"You seem to be quite a stranger among all here. Why do you not go aft, sir. There are tales worth the hearing to listen to, I dare say."

"I—I—that is—I am——"

He was too embarrassed to know how to make any reply. She smiled and said,

"I think I owe you thanks for your politeness in aiding me down the stairs which proved so unlucky for the stout gentleman who was with me."

This was said with a covert smile, which showed him that she was a lover of humor; and he made an effort to throw off his awkwardness; for, truth to tell, the presence of a beautiful woman draws all the awkwardness a diffident young man has to the surface. When he would appear the best, he generally appears the worst. The matter is not mended if the young man happens, like our hero, to be deeply in love with her.

"You have already thanked me, Miss. I shall always esteem the happiest moment of my life that in which I did you the slight service you allude to."

CHAPTER VI.

ONLY A SAILOR.

"I cannot but laugh when I recal the Squire, sliding down into the arms of the tall mate. If I had known his danger was most imminent, I should have laughed at the time as I did. There are very serious things that often excite mirth."

"Yes," answered the young sailor, who looked as if he was perfectly happy. "I am not sorry that he fell, so that he was unhurt, inasmuch that he gave me the opportunity of offering a slight service to one whom I would die to serve!"

"Stop, stop, sir!" she said gravely. "It is time our brief interview should terminate, I see!" This was spoken with a cold reserve that chilled the young man to the soul.

"Pardon me, Miss. I have been so rash as to offend you. I would rather perish than call a frown to your brow."

"You have not offended me; but I beg that you will not let the trivial circumstance of having assisted me into the boat, lead you to imprudence. I beg you will forget what can be remembered by you with pain."

"Sweet pain, lady!" he said with a low, deep voice that moved the depth of her being she knew not with what strange feelings. She trembled, and said, as firmly as she could,

"Let us be strangers, sir. If you wish to please me, do not regard me, or again speak to me, while on board."

"You shall be obeyed. Your lightest wish shall be law to me."

"You speak like one above your condition," she said firmly. "Your looks, your air, your manner, all assure me I do not address a mere seaman. Perhaps my curiosity is offensive, but may I frankly ask you if you are what you seem?" This was said partly with seriousness, partly with a smile at her own boldness; but a strong curiosity about him had been aroused in her bosom, and she resolved with an independence of mind characteristic of herself to question him.

"I would I were otherwise, lady, that I might be nearer thee; but I am only a sailor!" he answered sadly.

"I do not see why you should wish to be otherwise," she said, after a moment's embarrassing pause, for every word the young man spoke, the more deep interested was her feelings and increased her interest in him. "It is an honorable profession, that of the sea, and while a man is honorable and upright, he need not be ashamed of his calling. I trust you will one day be distinguished, and always successful in the career you have embraced, sir. You are unknown to me, even by name; but I have been interested in you partly from the manner in which you offered your aid to me, on the pier, partly from your conduct since you have been on board, partly from the superiority which you evince above your condition, and mainly, perhaps I ought to add, because you are a man-of-war's man, and belong to the navy in which I have a very dear brother. Therefore, I look with interest on all that wear the blue jacket and anchor! And besides I would ask of you if you may not have seen my brother since we had news of him; for I learn from the captain of the sloop that you have been attached to the frigate which came in yesterday. I trust I have now freed myself in your estimation from any boldness in addressing you unbecoming a maiden?"

"You can never do wrong, lady."

"I see you have learned to flatter at sea," she said, smiling.

"Truth is not flattery. Will you tell me who your brother is—to what ship he is attached?"

"The Constitution! She was last at Rio, I learn by the news that came by the frigate yesterday; but no letters came from my brother. It is Lieutenant Sweatland."

At this name the sailor started with pleasure; and then said,

"I left the Constitution at Rio to come home in the frigate, and I saw Lieutenant Sweatland the day I left!"

"You did? Oh, how welcome you are with such good news! Was he well?"

"Yes," lady, he was well—he was quite well," he answered, after a moment's hesitation, which her quick eye marked; and she cried, with alarm.

"Your manner contradicts your words! Tell me the whole truth!"

"Then hear it, lady; but it is not such as should alarm you. Your brother, an officer beloved by the whole ship's crew and esteemed by his brother officers, was so unfortunate as to have a misunderstanding on shore with a Brazilian officer whom he shot in a duel!"

"I pray it was a just quarrel on my brother's side!" she cried, with emotion.

"It was; and he was justified in calling the Brazilian out for he had given not only a personal affront to your brother but had added to it a national insult which, as an officer, Lieutenant Sweatland could not pass by!"

"I would it had been otherwise. But go on. What more happened?"

"He was arrested, before he could reach his boat, by the orders of the Emperor a favorite of whom the officer was who had been killed. Without examination he was cast

into prison and the Emperor sent word to our Commodore that as the officer had committed a murder within the Empire he should be shot the next morning!"

"Oh, my poor brother! What next am I to hear?" she cried, clasping her hands.

"No evil. That very night he was rescued from prison by a party of sailors, one hundred in number headed by one of themselves, and conveyed towards the shore. But the rescuing party was attacked in the streets before it reached the boats, and retreated to them fighting. In this skirmish your brave brother received a ball in his right shoulder!"

"Mortal?"

"No, by no means. He struck down two Brazilian soldiers after that, and held his own stoutly till the last. But as soon as we got him on board ship he fainted!"

"And now comes the worst I fear!"

"No more, lady. The surgeon extracted the ball and pronounced the wound by no means dangerous, and when I left Rio he was walking the deck, and rapidly recovering. The wound in his shoulder accounts for his not writing to you. I assure you he was doing well and is ere this perfectly restored!"

"Thanks, thanks! Oh, that he had sent by you some message, one token of his welfare! But he could not know that you would meet me as you have done, and perhaps was ignorant of your departure."

"He saw me when I left the ship and shook me by the hand and wished me a safe passage home; and bade me, lady, say nothing of his wound; but you drew the fact from me, reading it in my embarrassment when you named him and asked after him!"

"Why did he not return since you, who were in the same ship with him, have done so?" she asked in a tone of disappointment and doubt.

"He will come home in the Constitution when she returns, which will be in a few weeks. I came in the frigate for reasons not important enough to name to you!"

"And you have seen and talked, and shaken hands with my brother whom I have not seen for three years. You find great favor in my eyes for all this. How singular that I should have been drawn so singularly to address you. There must have been an inward monitor guiding my movements!"

"My guardian good angel, it was, lady; for to speak thus to you is inestimable happiness to me. But pardon me. It is not for one so humble as I am to speak in such terms to the sister of Lieutenant-Sweatland!"

"I do not think less of you for being a seaman only, sir; and so that you do not forget yourself, we shall be on good terms for the sake of my brother, whom thou hast seen, if not for thy own. Do you remain in the Kennebec, whither you are now going?"

"Only a few days, and then I rejoin my frigate in Boston harbor. I return to the valley of the Kennebec, after seven years absence, to see my mother, who is a widow. This duty paid, I shall make but brief stay."

Grace was about to ask him the name of his mother, that she might thereby learn his own, which more than once she came very near plainly asking him, when the voice of the Squire was heard close at hand as he came reeling towards her, dizzy and unsteady of foot with the undulating motion of the sloop; for the Blue-Jay was full two leagues off the land, steadily stretching away easterly before a seven knot breeze.

"Bless my spectacles, Miss Grace. But you seem to have had quite a long con-con-versation here, for a short acquaintance. Dear souls me! What an unsteady and very disagreeable motion this is. Really it is most unpleasant! One can hardly stand up!"

"You had best not try, Squire!" answered Grace, smiling as he caught by the side of the vessel to support himself and watch the weather-roll.

"I think I will go below," said the Squire with sudden faintness. "Don't stay up-up here! I must see you safe below first."

"No, no. The moon is too brilliant, and the sea air too bracing, and all is too novel and exhilarating. I could not sleep a wink, Squire, with thinking what beautiful things to see I had left on deck."

"Humph! Handsome young man-o-war's man and such things. Well, I can't stay to watch you, if you are under my care. I must lie down. Deacon Stockwell, be so kind as to—Dear soul's me! The deacon has rolled into the scuppers. He can't help me! I must——"

"Allow me, sir, to assist you to the cabin," said the young sailor, springing forward and offering his arm just in time to save him from going after the deacon, who had missed stays in a bold effort to reach the companion-way. The Squire, aided by the steady arm and firm step of the sailor, gained the desired haven, and disappeared in the cabin.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE SAIL.

"Do you feel no inconvenience from the pitching of the sloop, Miss Sweatland?" asked the young sailor, as he rejoined her after leaving the Squire in the cabin.

"None at all, yet, though I may soon have to fly; but I should be loathe to leave so fair a scene as this. We can see no land, and all that is about us is sky and water—blue sea—blue heavens, with stars in both."

"The stars in the sea are phosphorescent animalcule, that are found in the southern seas in great quantities, though here you see them only here and there, like flakes of light. In the equator, I have seen the sea on fire, seemingly with it; and the wake of the ship seemed like a furrow through a burning lake."

"How beautiful! The sea is full of wonders. I have always wished to go upon it. If I had been a boy I should have been a sailor!"

"I am glad to hear you say so. There have been sailors who have risen to be Admirals," he added, with emphasis.

"Yes, merit and worth will always find their way up, sir. How brilliantly the moonlight is reflected from the convex surface of that topmost sail. It converts it into a sheet of silver. How refreshing the cool breeze, as it reaches us across the water. Do you not think, sir, that the stars shine more brightly at sea? They seem to do now."

"The atmosphere is clear from the particles of dust and smoke that obscure it on land, and the sky is bluer as well as the stars brighter."

"Young man," said the skipper to the young seaman, "as we are well out in the offing, you can take a turn at the helm if you choose, while I go below and look after the passengers."

The sea was by no means rough out side though, as we have seen, sufficiently rude to send the majority of the Blue-Jay's passengers below to their berths. The billows rolled onward from the south-west in large shining swells on which the moonlight was broken as upon a shattered and ever-moving mirror. The wind blew steadily off the land about a six knot breeze, before which the little sloop went gaily along rolling just enough to make the motion pleasant to Grace Sweatland, who had made an attempt once to go into the cabin but was driven back by the close air and groans of suffering that proceeded both from the Squire and the deacon in the most melancholy cadences.

The young man-of-war's man stood at the helm where the skipper had left him; and as he regarded steering a sloop quite a light matter he felt like passing the time in watching the beautiful girl whose conversation had so interested him.

With her bonnet thrown back from her head, and exposing a clear brow and shining tresses of dark brown hair to the moonlight, she stood leaning over the quarter-railing and gazing now upon the sea, and now resting her eyes upon the dark, distant line which indicated the main-land. Her profile was turned towards him, and he thought that there

could be nothing so lovely on earth. She was the more endeared to him as being the sister of Lieutenant Sweatland.

To whom, as will be seen in the sequel, he had done better service than his modesty would permit him to tell when he was holding his conversation with Grace.

All at once she left the place where she stood and came near him, and after looking at the compass for a moment in its little illuminated binnacle, she said, turning to the youthful steersman,

"It must be delightful to go to sea! The air is so bracing here, the winds so free, the night so bright that sleep is out of the question to my eyes. How the little wave-lets that break upon the arching surface of the swells sparkle in the moon-beams like myriads of silver fish sporting upon the bosom of the ocean. You must love the sea!"

"I do, lady! I ought to love it, for I was born and cradled upon it!"

"You were born upon it! How very singular!" she said, half incredulous and smiling with curiosity as she gazed upon his manly countenance.

"I do not deceive you. I had no other birth place than the ocean!"

"I thought you were a native of Kennebec! Did I not understand you so?"

"My mother lives there now, but——"

"Sail ahead!" shouted the cook, who had been stationed by the mate on the heel of the bowsprit to look out, while he laid down across the main hatch on his back to take a nap.

The helmsman immediately stooped to look between the boom and the foot of the mainsail, and saw plainly about two miles distant the white canvas of a strange sail shining clear in the moonbeams. The mate did not wake at the call of the negro, and the young sailor thought it best to let the stranger show himself more clearly before giving any needless alarm to the officers. He saw that she was a small vessel, but whether a sloop or schooner he could not tell as she lay close-hauled and only to be seen head on.

"I hope it is a friend," said Grace, who also beheld the stranger, not, without a slight trepidation of the heart; for she well knew that the passage across the bay, short as it was, being less than forty leagues, was not unattended with danger; for it could not be that every British cruiser, especially those just coming on the coast from a long cruise, could have heard of the armistice preparatory to a peace.

She fixed her eyes upon the countenance of the youthful steersman, to see if she read in it any thing like apprehension or the reflection of her own fears. But it was calm and firm, while his clear bright eye was closely and quietly regarding the stranger,

"There is no danger, I think," he answered; "still, if you feel alarmed, I will run nigher the land. The port of Gloucester is just off the larboard bow, and we can run so that!"

"Not on my account. I am not timid without cause. You know best."

"I will at least be on the safe side. Will you be so kind as to ask the Captain to come on deck and bring his glass?"

The skipper appeared with his spy-glass in hand, and as he reached the deck he said quickly,

"Any thing in sight?"

"A sail dead ahead, sir. We have just discovered her, and I thought it best to inform you."

"The deuce you did, my man. Why it may be a cruiser at the very best. You are cool enough! Where? Ah, I see it! Let me look at her!" he added, as he slipped out the joints of his glass and placed it to his eye. He looked steadily for an instant and then said, in a slow doubting way, "I don't like her appearance much."

"She is a schooner; and what I don't like about her is that she is too taunt, and has too square a fore-topsail to be a trader; and then again she lays too nigh the wind for anything but a man-o'-war cutter."

"That is what struck me, sir. She is full, and lays with-

in six points of the wind. I thought she looked suspicious."

The skipper took one more look through his glass, and then said, peremptorily,

"Luff, sir, luff. Ho, Mr. Pike! All hands alert!"

The mate sprung to his feet and hastened aft, crying,

"What ith it, thir? I kept Blackey on the look-out!"

"And your Blackey has had both eyes open," answered the young man-of-war's man, "for he has discovered a sail ahead."

"And a suspicious one too, Mister Pike," said the captain.

"Spring to work and draw aft main and fore-sheets. I'm going to run straight as an arry for Glo'ster harbor. It's best to keep on the safe side, specially when we've got sich a valuable cargo aboard!"

"Then you don't consider your passengers anything?" remarked Grace, laughing.

"Wall, passengers is al'ays regarded as second to freight; but we don't al'ays get sich valuable ones as you, Miss. What do you make her out, True?" he asked of the long mate, who had taken the glass and levelled it at the stranger.

"She lookth ugly, capt'n. We'd beth run in shore awhile till we thee how she workth."

"We've got the weather-gage of her. She'll have to beat up and lay four pointh clother to meet uth!"

"Yes. Go for'ard and stand by to see all clear to obey orders."

The mate hastened forward, first placing the spy-glass in the offered hand of Grace; and the skipper, taking the helm himself, put it hard down, and at the same time gave orders to haul aft the sheets. The young sailor sprung to the main, and assisted by Jim, drew it close aft and belayed it. There he stood, looking at the skipper for further orders, but not also without casting a glance at Grace, who, in the most graceful attitude imaginable, was spying at the strange vessel through the glass. The skipper having thus changed his sloop's course, brought the stranger upon his beam, and was able to see him distinctly and to watch the effect of his alteration of the Blue-Jay's course upon his movements.

It was at once apparent. The schooner was seen to come up into the wind, flutter as she went in stays, and then fall away upon the starboard tack close-hauled.

"There she has us, and by this manœuvre she shows that she is an enemy and after us," exclaimed the captain with angry emotion. "I did hope to run across this tarnal Bay without seeing any o' their kidney, but here we are sure!"

"Do you really think it is a British cruiser, sir?" asked Grace, earnestly.

"No doubt of it, Miss. His actions show it plain enough. No sooner has he seed me luff up to run for Glo'ster than he ups helm, tacks and stretches along in the same direction, just enough nigh the wind to cut me off."

"And if we can't reach Gloucester, we can run into Salem or Newburyport," said Grace, who began to feel deeply interested in their situation, though neither in word nor look did she betray any of the weakness of feminine alarm.

Her voice was steady, and her eye self-resolved in its expression; and for these the young man-of-war's man the more admired her.

"That would be a stern chase and a long one, Miss," answered the skipper. "We should be sure to be overhauled by her, or brought to by a long shot on that tack; and, besides it would be running almost dead to windward; for you see the wind is S. W. by W. and Salem lays just here-away in the wind's-eye; and Newburyport couldn't be fetched by a couple o' points. We must try and run for Glo'ster! A little more aft on that main-sheet, sir."

"Is it not possible the schooner may be a friend?" suggested Grace.

"It may be, and mayn't be, Miss, but more likely to be a foe. At any rate, I'll keep on the sure side. We can reach Glo'ster anchorage in an hour with this wind, and I'll try it. The Blue-Jay will have to try her wings now, Mister Pike!" "Yeth Cap., I'm thinkin' she will; but I gueth we can out thail her."

"What do you think of her, young man, now that you have had your look through the glass?" asked the skipper of the young sailor, as he replaced the spy-glass upon the stationary becket over the companion-way.

"It looks to me, sir, like an armed schooner," he answered, with some energy and emotion, as his eyes rested on Grace, who listened with deep interest for his reply. "For your sake I trust it is a friendly sail!" he added, in a lower tone, which only fell upon her ears.

"Then we are in danger?" she said, with as much firmness as she could command.

"Whatever be the danger, be assured I will protect you with my life," he answered, with a tone that, she hardly knew why, gave her confidence.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BRAVE GIRL.

The sloop, when she first discovered the stranger, was steering nearly before the wind on a North East course, with the lights on Cape Ann about five miles distant, two points off the larboard bow. The wind, as we have said, was blowing about a six knot breeze, the sea smooth, save a long, rolling swell, the subsiding undulation of a recent storm. The sky was clear and sparkling with stars, and glorious with the splendor of the full moon.

The black cook had discovered the strange sail about a point or two off the starboard bow, and not more than two miles distant, close hauled and bearing up for the Blue-Jay. The dark outline of Cape Ann was visible on the horizon, and to the left stretched the long black belt of the mainland, relieved here and there, by the sparkling blaze of a light-house very far off.

As soon as the Blue-Jay, on discovering the stranger, had hauled her wind and bore up for Gloucester harbor which lay nearly N.N.W. of her, the schooner tacked, and hugging the wind, steered W. N. West, the very course to cut off the sloop from the port.

Such a proceeding, in connection with the rakish aspect of the stranger, was sufficient to rouse the suspicions of those persons who were on the deck of the Blue-Jay. Captain David Derrick was a brave Kennebecer, and True Pike was not a coward; yet they felt that it was wiser to turn aside than keep on, even though the strange sail might be a friend. The intelligence soon reached the Squire and Deacon Stockwell, and with pale visages and night-capped heads, they hurried up to get a look at the enemy, and, also, to see what was going to be done.

"You are wonderfully calm, Miss," said the young sailor to Grace.

"It is better to be so, sir. I must confess that I feel somewhat alarmed, but I hope for the best!"

"For your sake I feel that I am coward! But the sloop sails fast, and we may yet escape into port."

"I trust so. But I must endeavor to inspire my friend, the Squire, with confidence, for he looks greatly alarmed."

The Squire was indeed needing consolation and assurance; for, what with his sea-sickness and the enemy a-head, he was in great trouble, and at one moment would groan over his destiny, and the next anathematize the sea and all that ever sailed upon it.

"A prison! nothing else; and sick at that. Oh! Grace. Oh! would that I had never been so fool-hardy as to come by water, when I could have gone by land! Why, bless me! why don't you cry or scream? But you are too young, I dare say, poor child, to know what the danger is. Deacon, what is to be done?"

The deacon, who had thrown himself upon the companion seat in great trepidation, now raised his head and answered woefully,

"I know not, brother. We have tempted Providence by coming this way, and we are to be punished for it. I have six thousand dollars' worth of goods in this hold, and a wife and three daughters at home, and I am a deacon in the

south parish, and all is in danger from the ruthless foe."

"Don't despond, gentlemen," said Grace in a cheerful tone coming up to them, and seeming to be more indifferent than she really felt. "There is no doubt at all but that we are needlessly alarmed. The mate thinks it is a revenue cutter; and it is also the opinion of the young seaman from the frigate, who is a passenger on board."

"I dare say it might be, if one only knew," answered the Squire.

"I don't feel for myself half so much as I do for you."

"But the worst of it," said the marine with one arm, who had been ten months in Dartmoor, "the worst of it would be a trip to Halifax and a prison till it was known whether it was war or peace."

The deacon groaned heavily; the Squire sighed; and the ancient milliner, Miss Patty Barrett, who had also come on deck, ejaculated a hearty prayer for deliverance from perils and prisons.

"They can hit us if they should fire, Captain," said Patty Barrett. "I'm told cannons will shoot more than a mile."

"More nor two on 'em, marm, that I knows by 'sperience," responded the marine with one arm.

"Two miles; and the capt'n said we were but two miles from her. Dear me! I expect to see them fire a cannon-ball at us every minnit!"

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated the deacon.

"Dear soul's me, if they should, there would be an end of us at once," exclaimed the Squire. "Really I an't used to these things. I wish I was well and safe at home, and Grace with me. I was a born simpleton for coming by water, when there was solid earth enough to travel on, and no danger to boot. Dear soul's me!"

"Captain," said the deacon, earnestly, "why can't you turn right about, and run back to Boston?"

"Because, deacon, the wind is blowin' right from Boston, and it takes a live bird to sail against the wind. The Blue-Jay is a pretty sailer before or on the wind, beatin' or scud-din'; but I've got to see her walk right into the wind's eye yet. I'd gladly go back, if I could; for this chap a-head looks mighty ugly. If we can't run into Glo'ster, we must try and circumvent him the best way we can."

"And do you think you can circumnavigate him, captain?" asked the deacon, earnestly, as he sat on the hen-coop, holding on with both hands to counteract an occasional roll of the sloop, his face pale with fear and nausea. "If you'll circumnavigate him, captain, I'll give you one hundred dollars in hard dollars down to Kennebec, when we get there."

"I don't know how it'll be, deacon. We must do our best; for it an't in a true-born Kennebec Yankee to give up his vessel, to say nothing o' cargo and passengers, without doin' his best to save her. Jist depend on me, gentlemen, to do all I can, and don't make yourselves more alarmed than need be. Here is this young lady here, as cool as a cucumber, and might set on example to any of us for courage."

"She belongs to a brave race, captin," said the Squire. "Courage is born in 'em, male and female; but for me, I never had much of it ashore, and less at sea; but I'll be as calm as possible; but things do look pesky ticklish."

"I feel like dodging every minnit," said the deacon. "Don't you think they'll be apt to fire at us, captin, soon as they see we are runnin' away?"

"That'll depend on who they are, and whether they think they can catch us, and save their gunpowder at the same time," answered the skipper, with the coolness which had marked his manner from the first.

It was easily to be seen, by a close observer of his face, as he stood at the helm and directed the course of his vessel for the harbor of Gloucester, that he was not wholly free from uneasiness. But like a brave man he kept his fears within himself, while he did all in his power to escape from the supposed enemy. Grace stood near the starboard back-stay, looking at the stranger and watching closely its movements. She could see distinctly that it was a schooner, the distance was small. The young sailor, having performed

the duties required of him by the skipper, diffidently approached the spot where she stood. He was not without apprehensions of the worst; for to his practised eye the vessel was armed; and the probability was that she might be rather an enemy than a friend. Grace, on seeing him near her, turned and said, in that frank, friendly tone which had all along characterised her conversation with one who had seen and brought her news of a beloved brother.

"How is it, sir, that you, at this distance, are able to decide that this vessel is armed? May it not be, after all, a harmless coasting schooner?" and she fixed upon him the inquiring gaze of her large dark eyes.

"I will tell you how, miss. A trading schooner's masts are usually nearly perpendicular and of medium height, while the masts of this vessel rake aft—that is, lean over to the stern very much, which we seamen call raking. The masts, too, are very lofty, and she carries light upper sails that are only used by men-of-war. Her sails, too, as you can see, even at this distance, look top-heavy and too large for her hull."

"I noticed this, and this alone made me suppose it to be a coaster; for I supposed a vessel of war would have better fitting sails."

"This breadth of canvas in a peculiarity and a beauty in armed vessels. At this, the greatest distance a frigate can be seen, it is easy to distinguish her to be an armed ship, by the squareness of her yards, that is by the immense size of her top-sails and upper sails."

"Then you have no doubts about this strange vessel?" said Grace in a tone that began to show a slight fluttering, as she anticipated the danger that possibly menaced them.

"None, so far as being an armed vessel. We are yet to learn whether she be friend or foe. For your sake I heartily wish we had never taken passage to cross the bay; but it is too late to repent. If the cruiser is English and captures us, the probability is that we shall be carried to Halifax. Have no fears on your account, for the British officers are gentlemen, though our enemies; and—"

"The mere idea of becoming a captive fills me with an alarm I cannot describe," she said with emotion. "I think of my father's anguish, and—"

"Perhaps we may yet escape. This vessel has extraordinary speed and flies over the water like a bird. If it depended on swiftness of sailing only, this sloop would reach the harbor, and secure her safety before the schooner could intercept her."

"But you fear the firing," she said quickly.

"Yes, they may fire upon us, and compel us to come to, even though we had a mile the advantage of her."

"I fervently pray that we may escape. The deacon, who seems to be in such alarm, has a family, and so has the captain and mate. It would be a great calamity for them to be captured; and also for you and your expecting mother."

"You show your generous nature, lady, in every word you utter. You seem to forget yourself in thinking of others."

"Perhaps I feel, that as a lady, it will fare better with me than with others."

"You may be thrown into a gloomy prison, while I shall receive the courteous treatment due to a lady."

"We sail like the wind, young sir," said the skipper, addressing himself to the sailor, as if he felt at that moment a certain confidence in having a man-of-war's man on board. "Don't you think we shall forge ahead of him yet?"

"It looks like it now," answered the young seaman, approaching him; and taking the glass from the hands of the Squire, who, with his legs braced, was trying to steady himself while he looked through it, with a melancholy face he levelled it at the stranger.

"She sails like a duck," added the skipper. "The little Jay seems to feel frightened herself, and to be straining every timber to escape. We have gained on her fast, and have thrown her at least two points more to leeward than when we began to run for it."

"Yes, but—"

"But—I understand, young man," ejaculated the skip-

per with a sternness, and something like defiance in his voice. "I understand it, and that's the worst of it."

"What do you understand, captain?"

"What is the worst of it, captain Derrick?" cried the portly squire and spare deacon, both in a breath.

"Why that a fast keel was never yet fast enough to run away from long shot."

"You are afraid, then, that if we get ahead of her she'll fire," cried the deacon, in evident terror.

"Yes; there is no mincing the matter, gentlemen. If the cruiser is an enemy we are sure to be fired into, even if we get to the entrance of the harbor first; for by my calculation, when we get up with the light she'll be only half a mile astern; and a cannon ball don't think much of hoppin' half a mile."

"Then bless our souls, dear sir," cried the Squire, "what use is there in trying to run for the port, if we are to be shot at and blown up before we can get inside?"

"Oh, mercy! would I had never gone down to the sea in ships, nor done business on the great waters!" sighed forth the deacon, as he groaned several times heavily.

"There aint much use, only to do what we can, Squire; just as a man who falls overboard in a gale, and knows he can't be saved, yet keeps on swimming, as he ought to do, till he goes down."

"And do you consider our situation so perilous?" cried the Squire. "We might then as well pull down our sails and give up at once before a shot is fired; for a cannon-ball might do a great deal of damage."

"It would be sure to kill some of us, if not all," groaned Deacon Stockwell! "Young man, you seem to be calm; what is best to be done, for you have followed the war and know what course should be pursued in this dreadful extremity. Give us your opinion."

"All eyes were turned towards the youthful sailor to whom the despairing deacon had addressed himself; for each one on board, not even excepting the skipper himself, had seen enough of him on board to feel disposed to place confidence in what he said.

And even David Derrick felt disposed to comply with what he should propose; for he saw that he was a thorough seaman and possessed that coolness and judgment which in danger are invaluable. These qualities the Captain also possessed, and therefore he respected the more when, amid the general anxiety, he witnessed the exhibition of these in his young passenger. He therefore listened, not without the deepest interest to what reply the young man would give. Grace also bent her ear eagerly and with an expression of hope upon her beautiful face, as if she felt a secret assurance that he would propose a course that would, if any thing could, release them from their perilous situation.

The young man seeing that the question put to him by the deacon had fixed the attention of all upon him, not even excepting the mate who came aft to listen, answered with modest diffidence that became his youth,

"I do not wish to intrude my opinion in the presence of seamen older and more experienced than myself, but I will propose a plan that has occurred to me, whereby at least the evil of capture may be diminished to us, in case the stranger should prove to be an enemy; for if it be, escape to all seems impossible without a stratagem!"

The idea of escape, even by a stratagem, raised the thermometer of hope in the breast of the Squire and of the deacon, who had begun to see in the future only prisons and privations. We speak of these two gentlemen in particular, inasmuch as they were the persons of most consideration, and as their fears were the liveliest. Miss Patty, the ancient maiden lady, had her fears; but being a woman of a strong mind and firm nerves, she did not give way to them, but quietly waited the issue, feeling confidence in Captain Derrick that he would do in the emergency all that could be done. The one-armed marine had shown indifference than otherwise, greatly to the amazement of Miss Patty, who had supposed that his recent confinement in a British prison would have made him keenly alive to any

danger that threatened him with a repetition of his experience.

"But," as he remarked to Miss Patty, who expressed her surprise at his equanimity, "when one has tried it a leetle it ain't so bad as for these gentlemen here what hain't never tried it! Now it wouldn't be nothin' to me, as is used to it, compared with how hard it would go with them!"

"Dear me! How strange. They say burnt children dread the fire; and so I should think you would dread being taken agen. I *do* hope we shall get away from 'em. But here is the nice brave young sailor going to tell what his 'pinion is.

CHAPTER IX.

ONE CHANCE LEFT.

But their farther conversation was interrupted by the young seaman, who proceeded to give his opinion, as he saw it was the general wish, both of the skipper and the passengers.

"As we are yet doubtful as to the character of the stranger who seems to be showing a desire to interrupt us, and who nevertheless may prove to be a friendly cruiser, and as we cannot tell her nation without exposing ourselves to capture, I would recommend that we continue to act, as the captain is wisely doing, as if we were assured of her hostile intentions. With this view we are endeavoring to reach Gloucester, which is now a league to leeward; but the schooner's course as she now steers will bring us close together as we attempt to run into the harbor; and though we should out-sail her and cross her fore-foot even a half a mile in advance, her guns would bear upon us, and we should be either compelled to come to or submit to be sunk; to say nothing of the danger that would menace the valuable lives on board from her shot!"

Here the glance of the young sailor rested for an instant upon the conscious face of the young maiden, who dropped her eyes to the deck and blushed deeply. "Indeed," thought Miss Patty good-naturedly, "he seems to think there is no other valuable life on board but that of Miss Grace! Well, love is blind, they say, and I do believe it, though it never hurt my eye-sight yet!"

"Dear soul's me!" ejaculated the Squire at the idea of being cut in two by a chain-shot. The deacon clasped his hands together on his breast and groaned, as he thought of his goods, his daughters and his soul; and incontinently he began to bethink him of all the sins of his life unrepented of. The Squire was a bold man enough when there was no great danger present; but, as he remarked to the skipper, he was not used to being at sea, and 'hearin' loaded ball-cannon fired at living folks.' It was a very difficult situation and quite unusual for him as he thought; but to do him justice, his apprehensions were very equally divided between Grace and himself.

"The course that I would recommend," continued the young sailor, "since we are in no condition to defend our vessel by fighting, and in the supposition that the stranger is a hostile cruiser, is this: the main land abeam is about six miles off, and might be reached in a couple of hours in the yawl. I would suggest, therefore, that the boat be at once let down and filled with the passengers and crew, and that we all pull for the main-land, leaving the sloop laid to the wind. The enemy will then only get possession of the sloop and cargo, while we all escape from captivity, which, for the sake of the females with us, ought to be avoided even at the sacrifice of the sloop."

"By staying on board the sloop we cannot save her. The advice of the young gentleman is good," said the Squire, eagerly. "Thank Heaven, there is yet one chance of safety."

"But my six thousand dollars worth of goods in the hold," groaned the deacon; "and not one cent insurance on 'em! I can't leave my goods!"

"Then you must stay and share their fate," answered the Squire. "I am resolved to go in the boat."

"Your plan is a good one," said the skipper, as he brought the sloop a little closer to the wind, for she had fallen off a little as he was listening to those about him; "the yawl may go ashore with my passengers; but I shall remain on board till I know the worst, and my crew with me if they will volunteer. If I get my passengers out, I shall feel better, and be able to do different from what I can when I have them to think about and my sloop too. So, young sir, if you'll be so good as to see to the lowerin' the yawl and gettin' 'em aboard, and go with 'em and steer, I'll be amazin' obleeged to you."

"I will do so, if you command it, captain," he answered, "but I would prefer much remaining with you to aid in trying to effect the escape of *your* sloop; for, with only ourselves on board, a bold *push* might be made, which we couldn't attempt with so many lives on board!"

"Yes, you are right. I owe a duty to my passengers, and I'll see 'em safe first. Mr. Pike, send the two men aft here to lower the yawl from the davits. See that you do it carefully and not swamp her; for we are running so fast that we shall drag her under if you are not mighty particellar."

The boat was lowered and safely brought alongside. The Squire and Deacon Stockwell were all animation to get on board, the latter, nevertheless, bitterly lamenting the loss of his goods, but yet more anxious for his own safety. The marine, having no luggage of his own to look after, was very officious in getting together the band-boxes and bundles belonging to Miss Patty, who had gone into the cabin and returned laden with numerous flat paste-board boxes.

"In these boxes," she said, "were four hundred good dollars worth of lace caps, caps, ribbons, and other articles for her millinery shop down east."

The Squire, with his valise, and umbrella, and cane, and a new hat, made his appearance at the gangway ready to get into the boat which was dragging along the side and plunging the white water high before it. The deacon, with his trunk and surtout under one arm, and a bale of costly goods under the other, staggered under the heavy load to the gangway. Grace in the meanwhile remained without making any preparations, and quietly looking on. At length the mate called out,

"All aboard ath ith goin'?"

"It is very dangerous to get down into that little boat! Can't you stop her, Captin'?" asked the deacon.

"Whenever you are ready, gentlemen!"

"We are all ready. We must go quick, too," added the Squire, with a glance over his shoulder at the schooner which seemed each moment to approach alarmingly nearer. "Come, Miss Grace."

Grace did not reply, but stepping toward the young sailor, she said, in an undertone,

"I am satisfied that you are not going in the boat."

"I would not, were not your safety so very dear to me," he answered, with a boldness and sincerity that surprised him. "But it is the moment of peril that draws the heart out without disguise."

"Then you will go in the boat?"

"If you command me to. Were it not for your sake, I should feel it my duty, as a sailor, to stay on board with the brave captain and aid him in saving his sloop, if it were possible."

"And do you think it is possible?"

"Vessels have often been in as imminent danger as this, and yet escaped. It can only be saved by great daring!"

"Do you think, if you should remain, you could contribute to its safety?"

"I would at least attempt to save her."

"Do you think you could?"

"Yes. She is a very fast sailor. I feel confident we could, with running great risks, get away."

"Then I hope you will stay on board, and I also will remain; I think also that the rest will stay, rather than venture in this small boat."

"No, no. I will go for one," said the deacon: "of course if the sloop is saved my goods are secure; and if it is lost I am at least safe."

"You must go in the boat, Grace," said the Squire; and you, young man, must go to steer it. I am no boatman, and I have not much confidence in the deacon's skill or in that of Miss Patty; and the marine here has but one arm and can't well aid us in reaching the main."

"You must decide soon," said the skipper. "The schooner is within a mile and a quarter of us, and every minute is worth its weight in guinea gold to us all."

"I am in the boat for one," cried the deacon, as he first threw his rich goods and valise in and then sprang in himself at the imminent peril of pitching into the sea; but getting a fast hold upon the gunwale he secured his position.

"Come, Grace," cried the Squire, striding over the bulwark to get down, and extending his hand to the maiden.

"Come, I am responsible for your safety to your father."

"You say, sir, that the sloop *may* be saved by your remaining on board," said Grace, turning to the young sailor. "It is therefore your duty to remain. Those who go in the boat can manage her."

"I did not mean to have the assurance to say I could save the sloop if I remained," answered the young sailor; "I said that I believed the sloop might be saved, and that if I remained on board I would do my best to aid the brave captain to secure her escape."

"Then if you are so willing to remain, I am sure there is hope of safety in the sloop and I prefer remaining on board to seeking uncertain safety in this small boat, so many miles from land; for we should have to land far to the west to escape being seen by those on the deck of the schooner. I am willing, Squire, to take my fortunes with the vessel; for I see that the captain and this brave young sailor feel assured of saving her, if we are safe, or willing to run these risks, and would recommend you to also."

"I would not have you remain, Miss Sweatland," said the young seaman, earnestly; "the risks are too great. To escape from the schooner we shall have to receive her fire once if not more!"

"Just my plan," answered the captain, with animation. "I intend after I get near her to square away and scud before the wind, right to leeward as fast as the wind'll blow us. Of course she will pepper us as we go by, but I was used to dodgin' snow balls when I was a boy, and I guess it'll do in dodgin' cannon balls. At any rate the mate and I have made up our minds to try it as soon as we get you out. And I see this young sailor hit on the same plan."

"To tell you the plain truth, young man, I do wish you'd let the Squire, and deacon, and woman folks go alone in the boat, and stay aboard and give us aid; for I see there ain't no scare in you, nor in the young lady nuther, for that matter. But I'd rather they all make for the shore in the boat; and if as how the stranger is a friend why I'll make a signal by histin' a lantern to the top o' the mast, and you can come aboard agen."

"We must have the young man," said the Squire. "We can't do without him. He must go with us to steer the boat, while the deacon and I row."

"Very well, I will go," answered the sailor. "The safety of Miss Sweatland must not be compromised by any awkwardness in managing the yawl. Come, Miss, I hope you will not hesitate to go in the boat."

"I will do what you advise. But for one I am willing to run the same risks that you and Captain Derrick and his crew are prepared to incur."

"But I am not willing you should," answered the young man, smiling.

"Dear soul's me. I wouldn't have so much valour as this young Miss Grace has for a thousand dollars. I should peril my life a dozen times a day. Come, Grace, and let the boat be pushed off, for we are getting every minute nearer the enemy."

The Squire and Deacon Stockwell with the ancient milliner and the marine, were by this time fairly seated in the yawl, which was held to the side of the vessel by the painter, which was held by the mate with a half-turn round a stanchion, ready to be slipped at a moment's notice. Every moment made the sloop's position more dangerous,

and the skipper was anxious to get rid of his passengers, for he had resolved to try and escape the schooner, by receiving her fire and running the gauntlet to leeward.

Before Grace could decide whether to venture in the boat, or take her chance with the sloop, a bright flash illuminated the water ahead, and the next moment the report of a heavy gun reached their startled ears. The Squire uttered an exclamation of horror and dodged instinctively, a process in which he was imitated by the deacon. The flash and the thunder of the cannon decided True Pike what to do at once, and he instantly let go the painter. The next moment, the yawl with its four inmates was a dozen fathoms astern, gazed after by Grace with consternation and surprise.

CHAPTER X.

A STERN CHASE IS A LONG ONE.

"There was no shot in that gun, sir," said Captain Derrick, "or we should have heard it whizz by!"

And the Captain stooped and keenly surveyed the schooner under the foot of his mainsail, while he kept his sloop full and by and let her drive on straight towards the port of Gloucester as before. He seemed to have forgotten the yawl and its inmates, the moment it dropped astern, and to be wholly absorbed in the management and securing the safety of his vessel.

"It was a gun for us to heave to, Captain Derrick," said the sailor.

"I guess they'll have to fire agen afore I stir tack or sheet. Small pull on the jib-sheet, Mr. Pike." "Done, thir."

"And an inch or two on the weather-topsail-brace."

"Aye, aye, thir," responded the mate, speaking, and executing the command at the same moment.

"Haul taut bowline, for we must hug the wind close to get all the weather gage I want."

"Do you mean to run her fire, thir?"

"Yes, and I hope we shall escape with one round; but there's no knowin'. One thing is sartain, that John Bull shan't have the little Jay, and her valuable cargo without trying hard for it! I could ha' wished that the young lady had got into the yawl afore it was shoved off, for she was jist a going to, and this young sailor too."

"I couldn't hold on no longer when I thee how we wath fired at," answered the mate.

"Well, it don't matter much so long as she isn't afeered a bit! I only hope she won't be hit; and I'll see that she keeps below, under water-line."

"The thehooner both proved what the ith by firin' at uth," said True Pike with some emphasis. "There ith no mistakin her now."

"Wall, I don't know that nuther! She may be one of our own cruisers after all as wants to find out who we be, and so fires. If she had been an enemy, she'd put shot in her gun."

"The first gun fired for a vessel to heave to, is usually with blank cartridge," said the sailor.

"So it is, I believe, too," responded the skipper, who with one eye on the stranger, and the other on his sails kept steadily on his course.

"The poor Squire!" ejaculated Grace, who had been watching the yawl till she could no longer see it in the darkness and distance. "I hope that the boat will safely reach the main, sir!"

"Yes, Miss, they are but six miles from the land, weather clear and sea smooth."

"But perhaps they can't row."

"They will learn, be sure, Miss. I have no fears for three men in a tight yawl with three oars. I only wish you were with them."

"And now they are off, I do not. I like the present excitement. It is better to be here with brave men, who dare all to save the vessel from the enemy, than in the boat with such inexperienced sailors as the Deacon and the Squire. How pitifully he called out after me to come on board with

him, till he was out of hearing, as if I could walk on the water after him."

"Perhaps he thought you had wings like all angels, lady," whispered the youthful sailor.

"You have offended, not pleased me," she answered quickly, and turned from him.

"Forgive me," he said earnestly. "I should have known you better than to flatter you thus. Pardon me, for if you are angry with me, death were preferable."

"There again," she said laughing, "I see that you will soon get beyond mercy."

"I will take care not to displease you again."

"This is no time for hostilities with one who, for my brother's sake, I would be friends with. Think no more of me but give yourself to the safety of the sloop. We are evidently in great danger of capture."

"You should have gone in—"

"It is too late. I prefer being here," she interrupted.

"Miss, you must go below," said the skipper, as she came and stood near him.

"No, captain, I prefer being on deck."

"A shot may kill you, or a splinter wound you. You can't stay here now. I am responsible for your safety. You must stay down in the cabin till the danger is over. I tell you plainly we are going to run under a heavy fire that may sweep my decks; but this rather than capture; I have lost one vessel by the enemy, and I care not to lose another."

"Go, Miss, for I am about to square away for it."

"Well, I will go below to please you, but I will come on deck by and by."

"I will call you when it will be safe. If you hear firing lay flat upon the cabin floor."

As she passed the young sailor, she extended her hand to him with almost sisterly friendship and kindness.

"You are brave and skillful, and I know will do everything to aid the courageous captain; but do not expose your person unnecessarily."

"Are you indeed so interested in my safety?" he said with warmth.

"I feel interested in the safety of each life on board," she answered with a slight reserve, as if she would check too much animation of hope on his part.

For though he was handsome, and brave, and well educated, he was still but a young man-of-war's man; while she could not forget her own pride of birth and high social position.

"I am rebuked," he said, bitterly, as he dropped the half-withdrawn hand and turned sadly away.

"Be not foolish: we are friends," she said, with sweet pathos: and the next moment disappeared.

"I am in hopes the brave girl will escape unhurt," said the skipper, addressing the happy young man. "I must act as if she wasn't on board. She ought to have been a sailor and an officer, like her brother. She has his very spirit, sir. But we must think now of getting the sloop out of this predicament, and I am glad you are aboard. You heard my plan."

"To run near her, as if going to come to, and then square away and run to leeward before the wind," repeated the young sailor.

"Yes, just what I think of doing. We can get out of her reach afore she can give us more than one fire, and that we must take without flinching."

"But even if it was an American cruiser, it would be apt to fire into us if it saw us try to escape to leeward without noticing her signal gun just fired."

"That's true as scripture. But what in all nature must we do? Tell us how we can find out who she is, and save the sloop beside?" asked the skipper, a little perplexed at this new view of the case, and who seemed to think more of his sloop than he did of himself personally.

"I would advise that we heave to at once."

"Heave to at once?" responded the skipper, and the mate in the same breath. "Th's don't sound like the advice of a friend, young man."

"Yet it is. If you, an old captain, will listen to one so inexperienced as I am, I will explain the matter to you."

"We need every opinion we can get, young man," responded the skipper, who had for a moment begun to suspect him, for his abruptly given advice to heave to.

"You shall have mine then. By the course we are now running, if the schooner continues to steer as she does, we shall in ten minutes cross each other's track, giving us perhaps two hundred fathoms advantage in distance before she crosses our wake. Soon as she gets in our wake, she will rake us if we keep on for the harbor, and as the night is so bright her shot will take effect upon us as well as in the day time."

"What you say is all true! Now what remedy?" asked the skipper, who with the mate, was attentively listening, while amidships within hearing, were the Irish sailor Blackey, the cook; the idiot Jim, was leaning over the side, idly gazing on the schooner, as if he thought it a very pretty sight of a moonlight night. There was also another listener within the covert of the companion-way; for Grace found the cabin too close for her, or else her curiosity too lively, and had taken her stand just within the entrance to the cabin.

"I doubt not, but what we'll have to heave to, then," said the mate, "and I expect every minute to hear a thyt withlin' over our headth."

"We need not heave to for the purpose of surrendering, but to deceive the enemy," continued the young man-of-war's man. "I would advise that you heave to at once, before she fires a second time, for we may not escape so easily as at first. Seeing us heave to, the stranger will, of course, send a boat on board. It will not contain more than four or six men at the most, probably only a lieutenant and four oarsmen. We will let the boat come pretty near alongside, but before they come on board, we will hail and inquire what the schooner is. If it proves to be an American, why all will be well, and we will let them come on board; but should the answer show us that it is an enemy, we will at once put away before the wind, eluding the boarding boat in her attempt to get to the side, and stretch every stitch of canvas to escape to leeward. Then the schooner, which will also have heave to, on seeing us do so, will require some few minutes to get under weigh again, and each moment of delay will be of advantage to us. As we pass her, we shall, no doubt, have to receive her fire, but this is a risk we must expect to run, and I trust we shall pass the danger with but little damage to the sloop, and no loss of life or limb! The rest will depend upon the fleetness of the sloop; for it will be a stern chase!"

"And it shall be a long one," responded the skipper, who had listened to the details of his plan with evident pleasure.

"You have given good and skillful advice young man. I see you were born a sailor! I don't think your plan can be improved! What do you say, Mr. Pike?"

"It is our only courtth, then," answered the mate. "I only propose that we let the young man be the spoketh-man, ath he theemeth to know what he ith about!"

"I hope he will be so. You will hail and answer if you choose, young man. I will sail the sloop, which will be enough for me and the mate."

"Massa. I see 'em fire swingein 'board de schooner, jiss xact' as I see 'em afore he fire 'em big gun afore," said the African, hurriedly.

"We won't wait his fire," answered the captain. "Top-sail aback. Haul-a-lee. Haul aft fore and main sheets, hard aft with them, men. There she comes up into the wind, and now stands as quiet as a deer, except chafing a little at being so suddenly brought to. Now we'll see if the schooner fires. Watch her closely and see what she does?"

"The port-light is no longer visible," answered the young sailor, looking eagerly at the schooner, which was less than half a mile distant, and standing still on the course which, if both vessels had continued steering as they were, would have brought her across the Blue-Jay's wake, not two hundred fathom astern of her. The sloop had not been brought

to more than half a minute, when the schooner came right up into the wind with shivering sails, and backing her top-sails, and filling her main-sail, she remained stationary; for the sloop was too much to windward for her to work up nearer to her, as she then was situated in relation to her.

CHAPTER XI.

DARING DEEDS.

THE excitement now became very great on board the Blue-Jay, though there was no lack of coolness and resolution. The crisis of their destiny was approaching. Each felt that a few minutes would decide their fate. Every movement, therefore, on board the schooner became deeply interesting, and was closely watched by all eyes in the sloop.

"She has dropped a boat long side, I think," said the skipper with the spy-glass at his eye. "I can see that she has ports five at a side."

"Then she can't be a revenue cutter," said the young seaman; "she is, therefore, either an American or British cruiser; which we shall very soon learn."

"Soon enough for my wishes," responded the captain. "What a snug craft she looks like. There goes her boat. She is putting off."

"Can you see many men in her?" asked the sailor.

"I can scarcely make out the the boat yet; but take the glass. Your eyes may be sharper than mine."

"It is a four oared cutter. I see the moonlight reflected, from the two larboard oars as they dip and lift in rowing. We shall probably have only six men coming in her. Have you any arms on board?"

"Only an old musket I have to shoot ducks with, and the cook's knife, with four hand-spikes."

"Plenty to arm all of us. Get them ready, captain. If the boat's crew should attempt to effect a boarding after we ascertain them to be enemies."

"I'll have them all ready," answered the mate, preparing to go into the cabin after the musket. Grace took this occasion to make her appearance in sight of the skipper.

"There is the young woman again," he cried, looking at the seaman.

"And I shall stay on deck, captain, so don't order me down, for I shall be mutinous. I am too much interested in what is going on to keep below. You must let me hear, and see, and understand as well as yourselves."

"Well, you may stay, if you'll promise to lay down flat on the deck if we are likely to have a broad-side poured into us."

"This I promise," she answered, earnestly

"Then I have no more to say."

"I have over-heard all your plan, sir," she said addressing the young sailor who hastened to join her as she re-appeared, and proceeded to tell her of the danger of being on deck. "I hope it will be successful; but I rather hope that we shall find that the stranger, who has caused us so much anxiety, is a friend."

"It does not promise so well as this. We have no schooner-of-war cruising north of the Floridas, that I am aware of. It is, without question, an English vessel."

"And if so, it will not molest us. I have been informed that a truce or armistice now exists, by which there is an understanding, that vessels of war of both nations shall cease hostile proceedings until the result of the negotiation for peace is made known."

"It is not precisely an armistice; but an understanding does exist, yet it is in a great measure optional with captains whether they will observe it or not; for I am not aware that any regular order has been sent to cruising stations from Admirals and Commodores. And yet, were it the case, it is impossible that all British vessels at sea should have heard of this truce, or whatever may be the character of the temporary cessation of active hostilities."

"But if we are taken, we shall soon be released, for there is no question, I have heard, but that the treaty will be ratified by the English."

"But capture and imprisonment even for a day, to one so lovely as you are, Miss Sweetland, exposed to the gaze and rudeness of strangers, would be an evil to be shunned by all means in our power, and which I will prevent with my life, if need be."

"You are very kind! I hope for the best, and that your generous interest in my safety will not have to be put to severe trial," she answered with grateful emotion. "See the boat is coming very near! But its progress is slow."

"It pulls against the wind."

"It will be here full soon enough," she answered with a slight smile, though the sense of approaching danger paled her cheek.

"Is that musket loaded, Mr. Pike?" demanded the skipper, who still held the tiller head with a firm grasp ready to act at a moment's notice; while the men were at the fore and main sheets prepared to obey the slightest order. The top-sail braces were held by the mate, himself, who having arranged the musket, cleaver and four handspikes upon the main hatch, took his station by the braces, to be at hand for the emergency before them.

The young sailor with his spy-glass almost constantly to his eye stood near the starboard gang-way watching the boat; while near him, looking almost with his eyes, stood Grace, her pale, earnest countenance lighted up by the pure moon-beams.

"There are six persons in the boat!" said the young sailor, "and by the glitter of the moon upon their persons two in the stern are officers and carry weapons."

"You advise that we shouldn't let them board?" observed the skipper, who seemed to have surrendered his own judgment for the time being, to the young sailor.

"I will hail the boat when it gets within speaking distance, and we will be governed by the answer. If friendly we will not prevent their coming on board——"

"And if hostile, I shall square away and run for it past their schooner, and if they attempt to board us from the boat, it will be boarders repel boarders!" said the skipper.

"I beg you will go below, Miss Sweetland," said the young sailor. "The deck will be too dangerous a place for one like you, if the schooner proves to be an enemy!"

"I shall remain here, sir," she answered firmly, yet smiling, "should be unworthy to bear the name of my brave father and brother if I retired. I will remain and see the issue of this."

The progress of the boat was closely watched, and in silence, until it came within about two hundred yards, when the young man said,

"Captain I will now hail her."

"Yes! Take the trumpet."

"No. My voice can reach her."

All was now the most eager suspense. The sailor sprang upon the bulwarks and, supporting himself by one hand on the back stay, hailed in a loud clear voice,

"Boat ahoy!"

There was a listening pause, but no reply came back. All that could be heard was the dash of the oars in the water, as the boat seemed to be urged still farther towards the sloop.

"Ho! the boat ahoy!" hailed the young man again, in a much louder and clearer tone.

"Well, the sloop!" answered a deep voice from the boat.

"What schooner is that demanded the young man."

"You shall know when I board you," was the haughty response.

"That answer seems ugly," said the skipper in an under tone. "Stand by every man to his post to obey my orders."

"Give me a reply, or I shall fire into your boat," responded the young man-of-war's man, taking the loaded musket.

"What sloop is that?"

"The Blue-Jay of Kennebec! What are you?"

"A privateer and make you a prize."

"An English privateer?" demanded the young man.

"It matters not. You will know time enough."

"Do you mean to capture the sloop?"

"Yes, and you will be wise to offer no resistance to our boarding; for you are under fire of the schooner and she will sink you."

"Come no nigher until you show us that your intentions are friendly, or that you are an American armed vessel and you have authority to stop us on the high seas."

"Give way, my men!" was the only reply which came from the boat. "Pull heartily and stand by to board cutlass in hand, as you come along side. The fools mean to resist."

"Are you satisfied, captain?" asked the young seaman.

"Yes, enough. They don't come on board if there is any virtue in hand-spikes or in my old musket, Ticonderoga. Let go jib and main sheets, and square away the yard. Miss, you must go below. We are going to have right hot work, and your head is too purty to be knocked off by a cannon ball."

The brief, but earnest orders which he gave, were promptly obeyed, and as he put the helm up and let her fall off, she filled her canvas handsomely, and went dashing away dead before the wind like a race-horse, that has been long restrained by the bit.

There was not the lapse of a minute between the haughty answer of the officer in the boat, and the completeness of this manœuvre. The advancing boat was now almost in a line with their course, and the skipper had to luff two points to give her a wider berth.

The movement on board the sloop had no sooner been witnessed by the amazed officer in the boat, than he sprang to his feet, and waving his sword madly in his hand, he shouted to the skipper to come to again, and urged his oarsmen on with curses and blows.

This conduct only made the few persons on board the sloop more anxious to escape than ever, for from the mad violence of the officer, they were satisfied that if they were captured they would receive the worst of treatment. The boat, as the sloop came down to pass her, pulled vigorously to intercept her, the moonlight showing the officer making fierce gestures, while his voice was ceaselessly employed either in venting curses upon his men or upon the sloop.

The sloop was not long in getting headway, and was passing the boat at thirty yards distant at six knot speed, when a flash and a report from the boat was followed by a shriek on the bows of the sloop.

"It is Jim, the idiot boy. He is hit by that pistol ball," said the young sailor. "I implore you to go below, Miss Sweatland. Remain only until we pass beyond the fire of the schooner, for we must resolve to receive it or surrender, and the latter is out of the question, for I believe this vessel to be little better than a buccaneer. At any rate, they have no right to stop us. Go below, and lay upon the deck till this firing is over, and Heaven shield you from harm."

"I will go to obey you," she answered, and immediately descended into the cabin.

"I am glad she's gone below," said the skipper. "Now I shant think half so much of the shot. Jist put the companion doors to, and keep her there. Is the boy hurt much, Mr. Pike?"

This inquiry was addressed to the mate, who, on hearing the sudden cry of pain from the idiot, had sprung forward to his aid.

"He got the ball in the hip, and it lodged there, but I think he'll soon get over it."

"If the boat wasn't so far astern, I'd fire old Ticonderoga into her, to pay him back. But each man must keep low now. It is coming purty soon."

"By the lights flarin' and movin' about the schooner's decks, we'll soon have our prescription. Keep low, Mr. Pike.—Many a man has lost his head by being a foot too tall. Stoop all."

"Stoop yourthelf too, captin'," said the mate.

"Dont mind me; I'll dodge as well as I can! — must steer the vessel, but there's no mortal use o' anybody show-

in' a hair o' their heads twelve inches above the deck. Lay flat there you Blackey, and you, mister man-o'-war's-man."

"I'll look out for myself, captain, don't fear for me. We are dashing on bravely. As soon as you see the flash, drop every one of you! They can't give us more than one broadside that will harm us; for before they can wear to bring the other to bear, we will be too far to leeward, for the shot to injure us much."

"The sloop sails like a bird and no mistake in her at all," said the skipper, with the cool bearing that characterised him. "We are doing capitally. Now if their shot don't cut my mast in two, I don't mind their iron a bit. A small pull on that larboard top-sail brace, Mister Pike."

CHAPTER XII.

SHOW THY FLAG.

THE position of the sloop was now, indeed, a very critical one. That the schooner was an enemy, into whose hands it would be dangerous to fall, was apparent to all on board; though of the nation or the character of the stranger they were kept in ignorance. That she was a lawless privateer, possibly sailing under the American flag, was the opinion of the young seaman: for he knew that the close of the war would find many of these crafts not quite so rich as they wished, and for whom the war was terminating too soon, and to whom a rich prize or two, under any flag, would be an acceptable capture.

The skipper, however, was confident it was a cruising schooner from the provinces; but, whichever it was, he had no desire of falling into her power.

"She has no doubt heard I've got a val'able cargo, aboard, whoever she is," said the skipper, "and means to have a hand in it. I remember now a sort of a forin'-lookin' chap, with a mustachy on his lip, as was down peerin' about my vessel when I was a-loadin'; and he asked me a

good many questions, some o' which I answered and some I did not; for I did not like his way o' askin'; and he seemed too inquisitive 'bout my passengers. I shouldn't wonder if he see what I got aboard, for my whole freight 'mounts to fourteen thousand dollars; and p'raps he belonged to this here craft, or sent 'em some word; for durin' this here war all sorts o' such doings have been going on.

"Some cruisers at sea when they boarded a prize just out of port, could tell where the skipper kept his backy-box, to say nothing of his money."

"It may be that the schooner knows you have a rich cargo," answered the young man, as the two stood together while the sloop went bowling along swiftly before the wind, each moment coming nearer and nearer abeam of the schooner, which still lay to waiting for her.

"I know she knows it, and knows my craft too; for don't you mind that when you told the sloop's name he answered in a way, as much as to say you are just what I am waitin' for."

"I remarked his words and the way he spoke. We shall soon have her fire. Stoop, Captain. You can sit on the deck and steer."

"No, no! I'll never stoop for none on 'em. I'll stand upright on both my legs on my own deck. David Derrick don't know how to skulk. I should be ashamed to be killed, if I am to be, crouchin' for fear. If I die, I'll die like a man and a true Kennebecer, master. Keep low, men. Mr. Pike, your head is above the rail. We shall have a cast-iron hail storm, I'm thinkin', before we are any on us a minit older. Where's that young lady? I hope she's as flat as a pan-cak on the cabin-floor, for it would be a pity if she should get hurt. Do you see anything o' the schooner's boat?" he asked, without turning his head or his eyes from the schooner that lay sullen and silent, as if waiting for the sloop to get abreast before pouring in her fire.

"The boat is pulling hard towards the schooner. It will take full twenty minutes to reach it."

"So much the better. Every minute is a gain to the

Blue-Jay. They'll have to wait after firing to pick up their boat before making sail, and by that time we can laugh at them if they don't hit my mast or knock my bowsprit away. See the flash! There goes a gun. Now we have it! Down all!"

Every man crouched low upon the deck, and even the skipper involuntarily dodged his head as low as the tiller, which he grasped as a roaring in the air reached his ears. The young sailor sprang into the rigging to watch the effect of the shot.

Simultaneously with the heavy boom of the report the whizzing missile flew over their heads, not thirty feet from the deck; and, watching the sea beyond, they saw it dash the phosphorescent foam at least half a mile to windward.

"There was but one," said the skipper, "and we have escaped so much. There comes another!"

The schooner was for a second illumined by the flash of a second gun, and the iron globe roared fearfully above their ears, almost within a man's height of the main hatch. Like the other, it buried itself in the sparkling waves far to starboard.

"Why don't they give us their broadside and done with it. I don't like this target shooting. I'm thinking they are aiming at my mast."

"That is what they are doing," answered the young sailor. "They are training their pieces, and aim to dismast us, when they know we shall fall an easy prey to them."

"They aim well, that's a fact. The last one must have come within a foot of the mast."

"Yes, and if they improve at this rate, the next will—"

"Here it comes," cried the skipper, as the flash warned him of the iron messenger's approach."

The eyes of both, and also of the mate, who had got to his feet in his anxiety to watch the effect of the shot, were fixed upon the mast. The roar of the ball, as it rushed through the air, was terrible to unaccustomed ears. There was suddenly heard a loud noise above their heads; they felt the whole frame of the vessel quiver, and fifteen feet above their deck, they found imbedded in the mast an eighteen pound shot.

A simultaneous cry of surprise and alarm escaped from them all, for they saw that if the mast fell they were lost. The young sailor instantly ascended the rigging as high as the shot, and after a brief examination, reported to the skipper "that it might hold so long as the wind was as light as it then was; but if it came on to blow harder it would certainly go by the board."

The skipper at once ordered his men with cordage and handspikes to fix the mast and strengthen it, for it was more than half cut through by the shot, when a fourth gun was fired from the schooner, and with such unerring aim, that the bow-sprit was knocked from its bed on the bows, and shivered into a score of fragments. The jib loosened from its hold, blew out ahead wildly with a great noise, and the sloop broaching to a little strained the mast, which had lost the support of two of its stays, and with a sharp crack, the tall spar parted at the shot-wound, and came toppling over the starboard quarter, and with a tremendous splash, fell into the sea, dragging its huge mainsail and taking the topsail with it.

All this disastrous calamity occurred in less time than we have taken to describe it.

The fair sloop lay in a moment a wreck upon the moon-lit sea, and the splintered stump of her mast alone remaining above her decks.

For an instant all was confusion and consternation. But brave hearts soon rally though they may be for a moment confounded. The skipper saw at a glance that all was over and that the sloop was powerless.

"Well," he said, sighing deeply, and wiping the profuse perspiration from his weather-beaten face, "I have done all I could to save her; and no mortal man can do more. I only wish my yawl was here now, for then we'd set the sloop o' fire and try and escape in the boat. It would go agen my heart to see her burnin', but I'd rather see it than have her fall into the hands of the enemy."

The young sailor, on seeing the fatal effect of the last shot, stood for an instant as if petrified; for he saw that escape was now out of the question. But he trembled not for himself, but for the fair girl who had flown from the cabin on hearing the dreadful crash of the falling mast and now clung to his arms, not so much in fear, as in deep confidence and trust. He was ignorant who the enemy was, but he had seen and heard enough of the officer in the boat to believe the schooner to be a cruiser of the most lawless description, whether a British vessel or an American privateer.

"There ith no doing nothing more. We are done for thith time!" said the mate, as he surveyed the fallen mast and its sails, heavy with water, extended upon the sea, and the deck forward in disorder with the jib and part of the top-sail thrown upon it.

"Yes, we are done for, Mister Pike," responded the captain in a voice of mingled rage and sorrow. "I would rather have lost my arm than see the Blue-Jay in this fix."

"How pitiful she looks. She seems to feel it just as if she was alive and know'd what had happened to her. Ah, my pretty bird, you and I will never sail together upon the blue sea as we have done! Mister Pike, how is poor Jim?"

"He don't complain, but I know it hurth him bad enough. I've done what I could. The bleedin' ith thopped. I think it wath a thpent ball, and didn't go very deep, coth the offither was a good piethe off when he fired."

"Yes, he was. Wall, I don't know what to do. I feel 'mazing like fightin' and defendin' the Blue-Jay, but I spose it'll only make matters worst. If I only know'd what the enemy is."

"We shall soon know. They are filling away and bearing down toward us without waiting for their boat, which hasn't yet pulled in. As they have ceased firing after the effect of their shot, we can see that their object was to dismast us only and do as little injury as possible to their anticipated prize. They have a good gunner on board of her!"

"Those two shots were too well aimed," said the captain.

"They were stationary, and we moving steady along, so that they could make us a fair target. Shall we be civil to the officers that come aboard?"

"Yes, it is best. We are in their power!" answered the young man. "I do not wish you to be seen on deck, Miss Sweatland, until I have secured your good treatment," he added to the maiden who stood by his side, pale, but yet with a resolute eye.

She suffered him to conduct her down into the cabin, where he left her, closing the doors and firmly securing them. He then passed round into the steerage, and opening his chest, took from it a pair of pistols and a short cutlass. The former he loaded and thrust in a belt which he buckled about his waist, and placed the latter in it also. Over these arms he buttoned his watch-coat so as effectually to conceal them. He then returned to the deck, drawing the slide of the companion-way, and closely shutting and bolting the upper leaves of the door; for he said resolutely.

Before they go into that cabin, they shall first promise gentle treatment to the lovely girl, or enter it only over my body!"

The schooner came rapidly down, and in a few minutes got abeam of the sloop, and sailing half round her, she came to, to windward about a hundred yards off, and immediately sent off a boat to board the prize.

The appearance of the tall-masted cruiser, with her white sails shining in the moon-beams, was very fine; for she was in all her appointments, with her open ports and formidable battery, a rakish-looking craft. But her graceful and warlike appearance did not afford any comfort to the grey-headed skipper, who, with his arms folded, paced up and down the deck, feeling both angry and wretched.

"The boat has six oars, and three in the stern-sheets," remarked the young sailor.

"It matters little to me whether there is three or thirty."

Blue-Jay is gone forever. I only wish I knew who these people are!"

"Sloop, ahoy!" came sternly from the boat as it drew near the sloop's quarter.

"Ahoy!"

"Stand by to throw us a rope!"

"I should like to hand you one to be hanged with," responded the skipper in bitter murmuring at his face. "The Deacon and Squire are well up of this, and I only hope they reached the mainland in safety."

"Shall I fling 'em a rope, then?" asked the mate as they came almost within reach, and showed those on board that the boat contained two officers, besides a coxswain and six oarsmen, armed with cutlasses and pistols.

"You had best throw it. We shall only irritate by refusing; and we shall all fare better by a conciliatory," said the young sailor, as he took the rope and cast it so that the coil fell into the bows of the boat. The next moment it was alongside, and a young officer, richly dressed in gold lace and epaulettes, sprung upon the deck of the sloop.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BUCCANEERS.

At the close of the preceding chapter, we left the officer of the boarding boat from the schooner just in the act of taking possession of the sloop; the last words of the chapter being as follows:—"a young officer, richly-dressed in gold lace and epaulettes, sprung upon the deck of the sloop."

This officer was Rockwell Gordon. He wore a splendid Brazilian uniform and with his fine face and figure, he presented to the eyes of those on board the Blue-Jay, a very striking appearance.

"Who is the captain of this craft?" he cried, as he cast his glance haughtily around.

"I am," answered David Derrick, advancing towards him with the step of a brave man; "I ask you by what authority you fire into and now board my vessel?"

"By an authority that you cannot resist, fellow. If you had let my first boat come on board I should not have fired upon you. I did not want you or your vessel, but my business is with one of your passengers. Who have you on board?"

"You see all that are left, sir," answered the skipper.

"How left?" he cried, with quick suspicion.

"Some of my passengers have taken the boat and escaped."

"Escaped? Who were they?" he demanded with impetuosity.

"Three gentlemen and a lady."

"Who was the lady?"

"A milliner."

"Had you not another lady passenger?"

"Yes, but—"

"But did she go in the boat also?"

"I shall answer no more questions till I know who and what you are," answered the captain, doggedly. "You have made a wreck of my vessel,—endangered the lives of my passengers and now come on board here to put the catechism to me. I tell you, sir, I do not choose to answer till you show your colors."

"I am an American privateer."

"No American privateer captain ever wore such a uniform. Will you tell me what you have boarded me for?"

"I will not put questions, but look for myself," answered Gordon. "Your tale of the party in the boat is a fabrication to deceive me. Your passengers are in the cabin."

As he spoke he walked towards it, when the young man-of-war's man placed himself, as if by accident, before the doors of the companion-way.

"Ah, who have we here? Who are you, sir?"

"A Yankee sailor, sir."

"Do you belong to this craft?"

"I am only a passenger. I am a man-of-war's man."

"Very well, mister man-of-war's man, please to stand aside. I wish to see who is in the cabin."

"I cannot suffer you to enter, sir."

"What is this? Do you beard me. Stand back or I will have you cut down?"

The young sailor stood with his hand upon the butt of one of the pistols concealed beneath his watch-coat, and eyeing him fearfully, said,

"I do not fear you. If you are what you profess to be you will respect the sanctity of this cabin where finds shelter from the rude gaze of your men only, a young lady. The rest of the passengers, as you have been told departed in the yawl."

"So then she is here. Is it Miss Grace Sweetland you take it upon yours to protect, young sir?"

"Yes," answered William Armfield, for such was the man-of-war's man's name, "yes, and I shall defend her from rudeness with my life."

"Young man, you will consult your own safety by abandoning your purpose," said Gordon to the young man, who did not conceal his surprise at the officer's knowledge of her name. "This young lady is the passenger for whom I have laid in wait for this sloop. If her skipper had quietly come too and given her up he might have gone on his way in peace."

"What is your intention in wishing to take this female passenger out of my vessel?" asked Derrick stoutly. "Such doings are contrary to law! I protest against it!"

"Stand aside, young man!" cried Gordon.

"No, sir! Who you are I know not; but from your conduct and your schooner, I should say you were the buccaneer Gordon," said William Armfield.

"You have guessed it! Will you now doubt my authority or withstand me?"

"To the death! lay your hand upon this companion-way slide at your peril!"

"Do you not see I have four armed men on the deck? Delay another moment to give me room, and I will order my men to shoot you down!"

"We are four on deck also," answered William Armfield.

"You will be resisted to the death!"

"Advance upon him, men, and clear the way for me," cried Gordon furiously.

"Up men from the boat, and overboard into the sea with all these fellows!"

"Now roll it in upon them!" shouted the skipper to his mate and the African who, by previous arrangement, had been prepared with a huge grindstone near the gangway port, which a single effort could send over the side. At the loud order given by the skipper, they gave it the full strength of their shoulders, and tumbled it into the pirate's boat along side, from which the men were just rising to obey Gordon's command. The heavy mass of stone stove the bottom of the boat through in its descent, and it instantly filled like a sieve, leaving the oarsmen struggling in the water.

While this was passing, ere they were aware of it, the men who were in the sloop rushed upon Armfield. He drew his pistol and shot the foremost man dead. The others stopped and the skipper felled one of them with a handspike, while the others hearing the crash and cries alongside, fled to get into their boat, when, seeing it going down, they turned to give the alarm to Gordon, who in the meanwhile had fiercely attacked Armfield with his cutlass. The mate seized the two men and bound them fast by the aid of the Irish sailor and the negro; and then hastened to the aid of the brave young sailor, in whom, however, Gordon seemed to have found his match. Both of the combatants were bleeding with flesh wounds, as the skipper came near.

"Shall I fell him?" he cried, as he raised his handspike.

"No. Let us take him prisoner if possible, it is our only safety," cried Armfield.

"Not while I have an arm to defend myself," cried Gordon.

"It is useless, Capturing Buccaneer," said David Derrick.

"Your boat is sunk alongside—your men floored or tied!"

"He the schooner! send another boat full of men! we are betrayed!" shouted Gordon, as he retreated a few steps from Armfield's weapon while he gave the order.

"You must surrender or die on the spot!" said the Skipper. "This aint no fencin' school, and the sooner the game is up the better for you and me! Shall I knock him down, master?"

"Will you surrender?" asked Armfield, presenting his remaining pistol at his breast.

"Yes. I see that I can do no better. There is my cutlass. I was a fool not to come armed with pistols. But who expected resistance from a coasting sloop. But, my fair sir, though I am for the moment in your power, you will not enjoy it long. In ten minutes my boat will be on board of you. Now quietly consent to my going on board with Miss Sweetland as my prize, or I will sink you and destroy all on board, and after all, still possess her!"

"Let your boats come alongside first, if they choose!" answered David Derrick, as he skillfully cast a slip-noose over Gordon's head and shoulders, and drew it tightly round both arms just above the elbows. At the same instant he drew him up to the bulwarks and securely bound him to the side of the vessel. "Fast bind fast find. I see you're loadin' them pistols agen, master. What a blessin' you had 'em! Now Mister Buccaneer, which I see you are, if we are in your power, you are in ours! If you let one of those boats come within half-cable's length of the sloop without orderin' it back, why you see, I'll knock your brains out with my handspike, or this brave young master here will blow them out with his pistol."

"I see I am caught in my own trap!" growled Gordon. "These villains have the advantage of me."

"Captain Gordon!" said Armfield. "You see that you are in our hands. Revoke your order for your boats to come off."

"I will die first!"

"Very well. I shall pistol you, and then we will defend the sloop in the best manner we are able."

"Are you in earnest?"

"I was never more so," answered the young sailor, cocking the pistol he had just finished reloading.

"Look you, young man, if you will let me go again and return on board my schooner, I will give up my intentions respecting Miss Sweetland, and sail away, leaving you unmolested."

"I will not trust to the word of a pirate! Your are in my power, and I shall retain you for our safety. While you are here your officers will not fire into us. And with the morning I trust we shall be able to get aid from the land; for we are drifting in towards Gloucester very fast."

"I shall bleed to death here! I am severely wounded: I have a surgeon on my schooner."

"I am also bleeding; but as I said, our lives depend on holding you prisoner. There is one of your boats coming up on the weather side. It is the same that first tried to board us, and fired at us!"

"Yes it is my lieutenant Corson! I shall let him try to reach me! Pull hard, my men! To the rescue Dick! These fellows have made me their prisoner!"

"At once order that boat off!" said Armfield, cocking his pistol and placing it within five inches of his temple. "Do not hesitate a moment! At once give the order or you die!"

Gordon saw that his life was at stake, and gave the order, saying,

"Go on board the schooner, Corson. I am in their hands bound; They are resolved to blow my brains out if you come nigher! Go on board, and recall the other boats back to the schooner."

"How many are there in the sloop?" called out Corson.

"Five or six. But it is no use to attempt to come on board, unless you wish to have my brains blown out. Go aboard and hang on by the sloop till something turns up in my favor."

"You had best let me come on board, Captain Gordon," cried Corson in a tone of disappointment; while he was heard cursing those in the sloop.

"Obey me! I am talking to you with the muzzle of a pistol held within six inches of my head!"

"Well, if it is so, it must be done as you order. But it is a confounded pity we should be circumvented by a poor coasting craft in this way! how did it happen that they got you? and what is to be done, now?"

"We mean to keep your Captain prisoner, at least till we are beyond reach of danger from the schooner," answered Armfield. "If you will haul off at sea, and keep your distance, we will agree to let your captain go to you in a boat from shore. But any attempt on your part to board the sloop, or a single shot fired into her, and your captain dies on the instant!"

"You see, Corson, you can do no good," cried Gordon. "So go on board and run for a mile or two to leeward. Lay to for me, for I have no doubt that these persons will do as they say."

"We are no pirates to deceive and lie," answered the skipper. "What we say, we'll do. But I think it'll be fair you should pay me for the damage you have done my sloop."

"My gold is on board the schooner. Let me go on board, and I'll send it to you."

"Yes, mixed with grape-shot! No, no, I won't trust any gentry of your cloth. By right we ought to keep you prisoner and give you up to the authorities; but if you will send off your vessel we will give you your liberty soon as we get into the mouth o' the harbor, if we can get a boat for you."

"Let my lieutenant and two men follow you in a boat. You will not fear them?"

"Not if they keep their distance," answered the skipper.

The boat being permitted to come with only two men, the sloop with her sweeps out, began to help the flood tide, and move at two miles an hour into Gloucester harbor, while the schooner made sail and ran to leeward two miles, where she hove to.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOVE RETURNED.

It was now near the break of day, for the scenes recorded in the foregoing chapter had occupied some hours of the night, and the sloop moved slowly but steadily by the aid of the flood tide and heavy sweeps to the narrow entrance of Gloucester harbor.

Gordon, the buccaneer, still remained bound to the quarter railing, where he stood in sullen silence. Armfield, the brave young sailor, had resigned his station over him and his pistol, to the skipper, who never kept his eyes off of him, and opening the companion-doors he descended to see how it fared with the lovely girl. Upon seeing him she caught him by the hand, and said with grateful warmth, while her eyes sparkled with animation.

"Noble young man, I owe my life to you! I have heard and witnessed all that has transpired, for you did not close the sky-light of the cabin, and by standing upon the table I commanded a view of the deck. I have beheld your courage and resolution in your efforts to save me. Rather than fall into his hands, I would die by my own!"

"Do you know him, then?"

"As the worst of men; yet I owe him my life. But not now. Some other time, if we are in safety, you shall know all. Is there no further danger from him or his vessel?"

"None. We are going steadily towards the harbor. We are not a mile from the land. In half an hour we shall be in the harbor of Gloucester."

"And the schooner?"

"Is far to leeward, hove to. We have nothing to fear from her while we have her captain in our hands!"

"What a daring act was yours in thus taking him prisoner! How thankful I am that none were killed! How could he know that I was here?"

"Doubtless through his spies in Boston. It is plain he knew of our sailing and waylaid us!" answered Armfield,

who began to suspect that it was love unrequited that had led the Buccaneer to take this method to possess himself of her person.

"Sail ho!" shouted the mate, who with the rest of the crew was plying the sweeps.

"There is a sail, young man, right ahead, coming out of the harbor!" cried the skipper down through the sky-light.

"I can go on deck now," said Grace.

"Not yet! We shall soon be in port."

"You are right. I do not wish to see him," she answered slightly shuddering, and Armfield went on deck alone.

"That looks man-o-war-ish!" said the skipper to him.

"What do you think of her?"

"It is a brig of war," answered the young sailor. "No doubt an American, who has heard our firing and come out to see what it is."

"It must be that; the dawn is breaking fast now, and one can see her quite distinct!"

The vessel in question was now seen, by the increasing light of the breaking day, to be a large brig-of-war. She was not more than a mile distant and making more and more sail, as she came out of the harbor.

"Look at the schooner, capt'ing!—What do you think of that?" cried the mate. "She is making a run for it!"

"She is so," replied the skipper. "Now, you fellows look alive! Inter the boat, tu onct!" So saying, he let go Gordon's lashings.

Gordon seeing himself at liberty, felt that he would gladly have made an effort to get possession of Grace, or destroy her, but it was only a thought. The determined attitude of Armfield taught him that his only safe course was to get quietly into the boat. He did so, and then gave orders to his men to row for their lives!

"They can never get to their vessel," said the skipper. "The brig is coming on too fast for them."

"I should hardly have been willing to have let him go. I thought he could have escaped!" said Armfield. "But we had pledged our word, and this should be sacred to ourselves without reference to whom it is given. But he can't escape the brig."

"The brig is standing straight for us!"

In a few minutes the American man-of-war came near enough to the dismasted sloop to hail her. Those on the wreck saw that she was a large twelve gun-brig, her decks crowded with men.

"Sloop ahoy!" hailed an officer from the main rigging his trumpet at his mouth, the brig the while luffing a little under her lee.

"Ho, the brig!" answered the skipper.

"What firing of cannon was that we heard, and what schooner is that to leeward?"

"The buccaneer-schooner, King-Fisher, and commanded by the notorious Gordon," responded Armfield. "They fired into us because we would not heave to, and as you see dismasted us. Their captain then boarded us, but we succeeded in clearing our decks and taking him prisoner. But we promised him we would let him go if he would send his vessel to leeward and not molest us."

"What boat is that to leeward?"

"The pirate Gordon and his men making for the schooner."

"Aye, aye!" answered the officer as he sprang from the rigging, and gave several orders to his officers and men.

The brig was put away before the wind and she went bowling away after the schooner with a bone in her teeth.

Grace had come on deck as the brig hailed, and her beautiful face showed the gratitude that filled her heart at her escape from a fate worse than death.

"They are close to the boat," cried the mate eagerly.

"They have picked it up! His fate is at length sealed," said Armfield.

The boat had indeed been captured about a mile to leeward of the sloop. Gordon, however, showed desperate resistance till over-powered and bound. In the struggle Corson received a fatal wound, of which he died in ten minutes after being taken on board the brig. Gordon was at once put into irons with his two men.

The brig now kept on in chase of the schooner, but found that it outsailed her, and towards noon, seeing that farther pursuit would be in vain, for the chase by that time was full five miles ahead, it gave up the pursuit and returned to port, quite well satisfied in having as captives, the notorious Gordon, her captain, and having slain her second in command.

Upon reaching the port the next morning, the brig came to anchor abeam of the Blue-Jay, and the decks of which were thronged with citizens listening to the account of the affray.

Soon after Armfield had the satisfaction of picking up the yawl with its doleful company safe and sound, and not a little rejoiced at their deliverance.

It will be supposed that the passengers of the Blue-Jay had seen enough of the dangers and perils of the sea.

The whole party, therefore, took the stage for home, and after three days travel reached the Kennebec in safety. Grace and the young seaman had formed a strong attachment for each other.

When Major Sweetland had been told all the dangers which his child had passed through, and heard from every lip that she owed her safety, and the sloop as well, to the daring of a young man-of-war's-man, he at once went to his mother's to see him, to thank him and to reward him.

In the meanwhile days passed on, and the young sailor still remained with his widowed mother. Grace loved him with all her heart, and she was never absent from his thoughts; but they only met once or twice by accident, though the Major was kind to him, and offered his influence, and offered him money to advance him in his profession.

At length about a month after his return, Grace was surprised by the entrance of her brother into the house! After the first glad meeting was over, he was told of her adventures.

"What is the name of the sailor?" he asked eagerly.

"William Armfield!"

"I suspected it from the first! He saved me from being shot in Rio, by heading a large party of sailors and rescuing me. But he is no common sailor. He was our youngest lieutenant in the frigate. But he disguised himself as one of the sailors and they believed him to be one of themselves for it would not have done for an officer to be openly known in the affair. His gallantry saved my life. But he began to be suspected, and by my advice asked leave of absence, for the Brazilian Admiral had threatened to detain the frigate unless he were given up. Our Captain did not like a collision, and Armfield came home as a seaman, for as he left Rio, he feared vessels might be on the watch for him. It was by my advice he came here to remain with his mother till my return, so that we could go to Washington together; for I have, I believe, influence enough with the department to get the matter over-looked; for he has made himself amenable to a court-martial. It was chiefly to serve him that I came home! Why, Grace, what makes your eyes sparkle so with joy?"

She blushed and cast down her eyes. He at once saw how things stood and said,—

"I won't press you. If you love each other I am glad of it; for Armfield is a noble fellow and worthy of any woman—even my beloved Grace. But I must hasten to see him."

We shall not attempt to describe the happiness of Grace or our young hero, when, that evening in the parlor of her father's mansion, their hands were joined by the father, who gave his full consent to their union. Lieutenant Sweetland embraced Armfield as a brother; and the clouds that had cast a shadow upon the heart were now dissipated by the sunshine of hope and joy.

In about two months afterwards appeared the two following paragraphs in the day's paper:

On Thursday last, was married Lieutenant William Armfield, of the U. S. N., to Grace, only daughter of Major Sweetland of Hallowell." "On Friday last, the celebrated buccaneer, Gordon, was hanged in Boston, both for being accessory to the murder of his own mother, and for his numerous piracies on the high seas. He met his fate with the most hardened indifference."

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